CONSIDERING CANTERBURY CATHEDRAL I

HISTORY DEATH TIME

Bernard Sharratt

New Crisis Quarterly

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I

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GATE NAVE ADAM

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New Crisis Quarterly
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NEW CRISIS QUARTERLY

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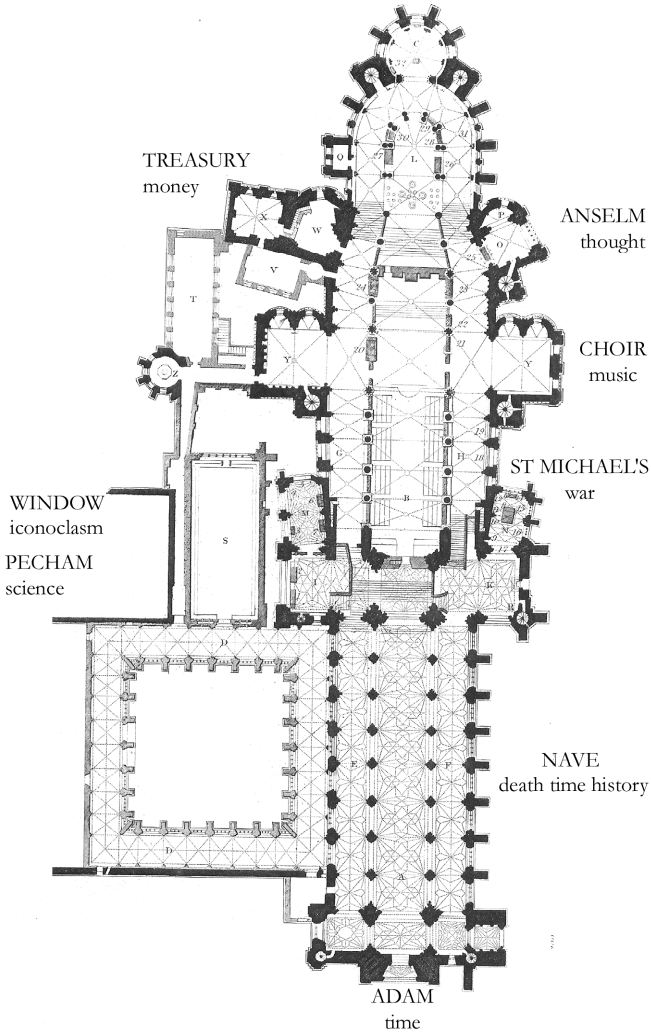
The cover image is from an album of Frith photos c.1858

Everyone should live in their own cathedral.
(1968 Situationist slogan)

For Paul

with love and thanks for
being yourself
arguing with me a lot
and translating WB


TREASURY
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Preamble I

Canterbury Cathedral is rather large. So is this book. What began as a leisurely stroll has grown into a fairly long walk. So, simply for convenience, this volume is now one of three. I'd prefer that you read all three, consecutively, but as with visiting the cathedral you can always skip, or wander, or browse what happens to interest you. Nevertheless, I hope the whole project might be read as a single rather meandering essay.

Works about cathedrals fall into familiar categories: tourist guide, architectural history, lavishly illustrated coffee-table book. There's also a library of scholarly studies, and numerous books on the religious function of cathedrals, their place in contemporary society, and so on. I didn't want to write any of those.

For many years I had the task, when family and friends visited Canterbury, of being the one to 'show them round' the cathedral. It's a pleasant way to spend a few hours, and I've learned a great deal, not just about the cathedral. I've also recognised that people have very different ranges of prior knowledge, so getting the tone right between stating the obvious and offering too much detail is always tricky. This essay is intended to be like a conversational ramble with a patient friend, but as an old academic I can't wholly avoid a seminar or lecture mode. But what else would you expect from considering a cathedral?

In particular, I know that my own reaction, when visiting other cathedrals, is that just being told the dates of long-dead bishops, or details about the masonry, or the style of arches, doesn't match what a building such as Canterbury Cathedral evokes, or clarify what the place seems to say to a visitor who is awed or impressed or puzzled by it. A cathedral invite us to think about rather large issues which are difficult to get into focus.

Meandering through the cathedral I remember T. S. Eliot's phrase about allowing a 'half-formed thought to pass'. As we drift and gaze and comment, we are half-conscious of a complex set of responses, but we're tempted simply to shrug and wander on. Trying to articulate how we are responding to this unique place takes more time than people have in a short visit.

So this is an attempt to follow through some of my own 'half-formed' thoughts prompted by the cathedral rather than simply 'about' the cathedral. I've ended up considering a variety of issues in a loose relation to different parts of the building, as the plan opposite indicates. This first part is mainly concerned with the nave, some of the memorials, and the great west window. I've tried to think about history and historians, the past, death, and time.

The second part is concerned with some issues around art and iconoclasm, with aspects of the history of science, and questions about money or economics. The concluding third part is concerned with the odd business of thinking, and finally with music.

But how do you put a cathedral into a book?

Partly by using lots of quotations. I've treated the many quotations as retrieved fragments of the past, like the surviving stones of the building itself. The essay is not intended as a scholarly work and I haven't used footnotes but hope I've given enough information on my sources to make them easy enough to find on the net. I've tried to respect the 'fair use' conventions of copyright and I offer my own translations (and my son's) where possible. To have included colour illustrations would have more than doubled the price of the book, but it's easy to find appropriate images of the cathedral.

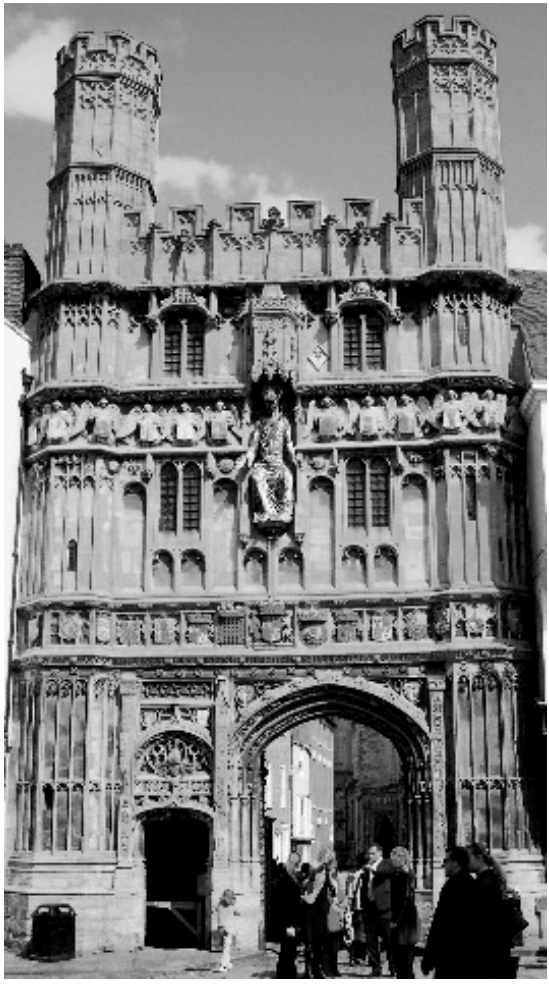
The sub-headings are simply to help you find your way about, since there are many points to pause over and consider or query, but at least, unlike a real visit, you can take as much time as you like. Ideally, as in old-fashioned books, I would have incorporated a silk thread as a place marker.

This second edition was redesigned simply to make reading easier on the eye. The final volume includes some personal acknowlegements.

Rather than spend more time explaining how I came to write this extended and idiosyncratic work, let me now offer a kind of overture or sampler, by first thinking, appropriately enough, about the main gate into the cathedral precincts. And why it's worth pausing to consider it.

So, if you would care to accompany me…

GATE

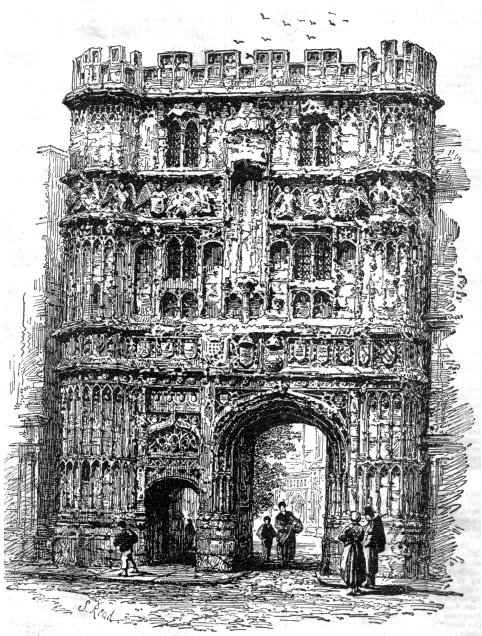


Visitors normally enter the cathedral precincts through the 'Christ Church Gate' situated at one corner of the Buttermarket, where the Burgate bends round into Sun Street. Those street names evoke a very different age. In the days of smartphones, internet maps, and online image data-bases, there seems little point in describing the gate or its location. I have simply provided a standard view of the gate, as photographed hundreds of times a day when the floods of summer tourists and parties of schoolkids on educational trips arrive in front of it.

Fairly often, passing through the area just outside the gate, I overhear a teacher sternly asking a group of pupils, as they wait to file through the gate: "So, how old is the gateway?" They guess, clamorously or indifferently, estimating styles and period features. It's a trick question. Because there's a date carved on the gate itself. In letters about a foot high, stretching across the entire width of the façade. But it's written in Latin words, not even Roman numerals, and most people just blank out when faced with what is actually fairly obvious Latin. The inscription reads: HOC OPUS CONSTRUCTUM EST ANNO DOMINI MILLESIMO QUINGENTESIMO SEPTIMO. Which can be translated as: 'This work was constructed in the year of our Lord one thousand five hundred and seven.' So, you might think, the gate was built in 1507. The teacher's question can be answered by any pupil smart enough to spot the inscription and confident enough to have a go at the Latin.

But this is where the question turns out to be interesting. That date is almost certainly wrong. This imposing gateway has a thirty-foot-wide date on it, which is wrong! I can understand somebody making a slip of the pen and mis-dating a letter, or even a cheque, but cutting several dozen Roman letters into stone can hardly be a slip of the chisel. So what happened? Does the date matter anyway? And what, after all, is a date?

Look at another image of this gate, a drawing from *The Illustrated London News*, August 8th, 1874. The whole gateway was clearly in very poor condition, and had been for some time.



CHRIST CHURCH GATE.

Eventually the gate was restored, in the 1930s, and during that restoration the wrong date was so magnificently and incorrectly carved upon the front. Why?

The date was taken from the first scholarly book which tried to give a detailed description of the cathedral. Written by William Somner, who was then in effect the archivist at the cathedral, it was published in 1640, one of the first books to provide a scholarly historical account of an English provincial city. My battered copy of Somner's book has the following entry for the gate:

> A very goodly, strong and beautifull structure, and of excellent artifice, built in the year 1507, as appeares by this now scarcely legible inscription on the Gate's Front. *Hoc opus constructum est Anno Domini Millesimo, Quingentesimo septimo.*

So the carver of the date in the 1930s took Somner's word for it, literally.

One shouldn't always believe what one reads in books (even this one). If only because in this instance several later books give a different date: that of 1517. Here's William Gostling, who wrote the first popular tourist guide-book to the city and cathedral, published in 1774:

> I come now to survey our cathedral and its precinct, entering at its principal gate, "a very goodly, strong, and beautifull structure, and of excellent artifice", (says Mr. Somner) built in the year 1517, as appears by this now scarcely legible inscription: *Hoc opus constructum est anno Domini millesimo quingentesimo [decimo] septimo"* — How the word *decimo* came to be overlooked by him, we can only guess, for the words are all at length in capitals, a span long, taking up the depth and almost the length of a cornice, a little above the arch, which runs along the front of the building, and turns round the two octagonal towers, at the corners of it.
>
> Age indeed has made the cornice and inscription pretty near of the same colour, so that it does not take the eye, though it is legible enough with a little attention; but however it happened, Mr Somner made the mistake..

As a fellow scholar, Gostling offers a sympathetic excuse for Somner:

> His saying "the inscription is scarcely legible" will justify my supposing he engaged some one to copy it, whose eyes were not hurt by poring in old manuscripts and records, and depended too much on their capacity and fidelity.

Yet what possible excuse did the man in charge of the 1930s restoration (F. W. Caroe, let's unsympathetically name him) have for getting it wrong?

As a way of introducing the general problem of how 'history' gets written, it's worth pausing for a moment on this apparently minor issue. It has ramifications.

the ironies of Arthur

Philip Blake, in a pamphlet on the gate, published in 1965, examined the various coats of arms you can see on the front of the gate, and a few you now can't, and showed that most of them must date from several years *after* 1507, since such heraldic devices often incorporate indications of marriages or important appointments, which can themselves be dated. For example, the arms of Archbishop Wolsey on the gate show him as a Cardinal, which he only became in 1515. Caroe, to be fair to him, had himself argued in 1930 that some details of the coats of arms might suggest a different date.

We know, from the financial archives of the cathedral, that money for the gate was first allocated in 1504. We also know from the detailed rental records of the shops just inside the gateway, that re-building the gate took several years, and happened mainly under the direction of Prior Thomas Goldstone, who died in 1517 — which is perhaps the main reason why that date was the one originally included on the façade. His successor, Prior Thomas Goldwell, whose symbol (a gold well, of course) is on the underside of the vault, finished building the gate, probably in time for 1520, a 'jubilee year' of Saint Thomas Becket, celebrated every fifty years. It was the final piece in a major re-building programme and ambitious renovation of the entire cathedral which had taken a generation or so. Prior Goldwell must have been well pleased when it was finally finished — or so he thought.

There's an imaginative description of that moment of completed splendour in one of the most useful older books about the history of the cathedral, *A Chronological History of Canterbury Cathedral* by G. Smith, published in 1883. The following passage (p. 229) is the kind of writing you don't often encounter in the sober prose of today's more restrained historians, but it magnificently conjures up that moment in 1520.

> Let us imagine ourselves about to enter the Precincts at the south Gatehouse. As we approach, we admire the recently finished edifice, in all its beauty; with its embattled parapet and octagonal turrets, its large central canopied niche and statue—flanked by rows of angels with outspread wings— its handsome gates, gateway and postern,—the shafts, mouldings, and enriched spandrils, surmounted with beautiful ornaments, shields of arms, and Latin inscription, fresh from the sculptor's chisel.
>
> Passing beneath this "very goodly, strong, and beautiful structure", the vast Cathedral bursts on our view; its ancient Norman tower crowned by Arundel's spire; the south-west tower, nave, transept, and

> stately Angel Steeple, all fresh and fair; the tracery, carved ornaments and mouldings, chaste and perfect.

This is still a tourists' favourite view of the cathedral, photographed as often as the gate itself. As here, for example, taken by Frith in the 1850s.

Unfortunately, like the gate, this view is not quite what it seems. The impressive symmetry of the two eastern towers does not date from the mediaeval period, but from the 1830s. What had once been the very distinctive 11th century north-east tower, on the left, previously capped by a tall steeple, had almost collapsed in the nineteenth century and was replaced by a deliberate imitation of the south-east tower on the right. Still, it's highly photogenic.

Let us continue Smith's imagined visit in 1520:

> On entering the church, an embodiment of magnificence and beauty meets the view; brilliant stained glass windows reflect their splendid colours, and tinge the clouds of perfumed incense. Wax tapers continually burning on the side altars, and on those in the apsidal chapels, shed their glittering radiance around.
>
> Exquisitely sculptured statues and silver images, carved and ornamented stalls, superb tapestry hangings, walls and screens decorated with painting, gilding, and bright colours; the high altar resplendent with gold, silver, and precious stones; gorgeous shrines, fair sculptured monuments; the surpassing splendours of the *Vestiarium*; the chantries and the chapels of the Virgin, with their architectural beauties and sumptuous adornments; the picturesque and splendid vestments of the priests; the blaze of light, the pomp and pageantry, all combine to dazzle the senses and fire the imagination.

> We can try to imagine too, the beauty of the Cloisters, with its south alley glazed and fitted with oak 'carrells'. The Chapter House, with its splendidly painted and gilded roof, its stained glass windows, and its gilded throne. The sumptuous Palace, the Prior's mansion and chapel, the Guest's Chambers, the Cellarer's Lodgings, the Infirmary, and numerous other conventual structures, forming together an assemblage of examples of architectural styles, and of the art of building, alike unsurpassed for variety, for beauty of design, and for excellency of construction.

Wonderfully evocative. Truly splendid. And yet.

Just a few years later Thomas Goldwell was to be the last Catholic prior of Christ Church. He and most of his monks signed the acknowledgement of King Henry VIII's Royal Supremacy on 10 December 1534. In summer 1537 he even received Henry and his latest doomed love, Jane Seymour, at St Augustine's Abbey, just over the road from the cathedral, on their summer progress to Canterbury and Dover. Goldwell was given a pension of £80 on 4 April 1539 and appointed one of the beneficed clergy at the New Cathedral Foundation, after the monastery's final closure by Archbishop Cranmer in March 1539.

dismantling

There is therefore a historical irony about this gate. After his investigations into the coats of arms, Philip Blake suggested a plausible reason why such an imposing gate was built. What seemed to link the apparently miscellaneous group of aristocrats and clerics whose various coats of arms still adorn the gate wasn't simply a vague connection as 'benefactors', the usual limp explanation, but that they had all been associated with significant moments in the life of Prince Arthur. Not the mythical King Arthur of patriotic and Hollywood legend, but the eldest son of King Henry VII. That this Arthur is now more or less lost to popular memory isn't the gate's fault since, according to Blake, the new gate was built precisely in order to commemorate him.

Arthur's coat of arms, as Prince of Wales, is up there on the gate, alongside that of Catherine of Aragon, whom Arthur married by proxy in 1499, when he was only thirteen, and then married properly on November 4th 1501. But Prince Arthur died very soon after, on 2nd April 1502, still only sixteen. And with him died Henry VII's careful plans for the future of his dynasty. Arthur had been deliberately named after the legendary King Arthur as a gesture towards a reconcilation between the York and Lancaster factions in the bitter Wars of the Roses, and his marriage to Catherine of Aragon was intended to bring about an alliance between the rival and potentially warring royal families of England and Spain. An ambitious double project.

But in 1502, with the devastating disappointment of Arthur's early death, that complex combination of hopes and plans was passed on to his younger brother, who was promptly betrothed to his dead brother's widow Catherine (thanks to a papal dispensation) in 1503. When King Henry VII himself died in 1509 that younger brother came to the throne and married Catherine in the same year.

Arthur's younger brother was of course Henry VIII. And it was his attempt in 1533 to have his marriage to Catherine annulled, partly (and despite the earlier papal dispensation) on the grounds of her previous marriage to his brother Arthur, which opened the way to the English Reformation and ended any prospect of alliance with Catholic Spain. It also led to the dissolution of the monasteries. Including this one.

In 1538, five years after Henry first tried to annul his marriage, Prior Goldwell watched Henry VIII's Commissioners destroy the shrine of Saint Thomas Becket which had been at the heart of the cathedral for more than three hundred years. A year later the monastery itself was effectively dissolved.

So, if Prince Arthur had not died, this gate would not have been erected in his memory. Undoubtedly at some time another new gate would have been built. But if Arthur hadn't died young, any such gate might just possibly still be that of an English Roman Catholic monastery, even today. Arthur's early death set in motion a chain of events which led to the dismantling in England of an ecclesiastical order under which the cathedral at Canterbury had been built and had flourished for nearly a thousand years, since 597 A.D. Without Arthur's premature death it's just conceivable that the Henrican Reformation might never have happened, and certainly not in the way it did. So this gate commemorates an unexpected transformation in its own significance.

It's also arguable that Henry VIII's reform of the relations between church and state in England directly encouraged the development of social forces which were eventually to reduce the gate to the neglected condition from which it so badly needed rescuing in the 1930s, and perhaps even encouraged one factor in the reason why the date carved on it is wrong. So let's take a further moment or two before we actually enter through the gate.

images and angels

The first of those social forces can loosely be called 'Puritanism', though the term dates from somewhat later. Just over a hundred years after Henry VIII's destruction of the shrine of Thomas, some of the spiritual inheritors of the more ardent wing of the Reformation galloped into Canterbury. On 30th August 1642 Dr. Paske, the Sub-Dean of the Cathedral, sent the following anguished letter to an 'Honourable Lord'. I've partly kept the original spelling and style to help capture the urgent feel of that moment:

Colonell Sandys arriving here with his Troops on Friday night, presently caused a strict Watch and Sentinels to be set, both upon the Church, and upon our severall houses, to the great affright of all the Inhabitants. This done, Sergeant Major Cockaine came to me, and in the name of the Parliament, demanded to see the Armes of the Church, and the Store-powder of the County, which I presently shewed him, when he possessed himselfe of the Keyes and kept them in his owne custody. The next morning we were excluded the Church, and might not be permitted to enter, for the performance of our Divine exercises, but about 8 of the Clock, Sir Michael Linesey, attended with many Souldiers, came unto our Offices, and commanded them to deliver up the Keyes of the Church to one of their company, which they did, and thereupon he departed.

Then the Souldiers, entring the Church and Quire, Giant-like began a fight with God Himself, overthrew the Communion Table, tore the Velvet Cloth from before it, defaced the goodly Screen, or Tabernacle worke, violated the Monuments of the dead, spoiled the Organs, brake downe the ancient Railes and Seates, with the brazen Eagle that did support the Bible, forced open the Cupboords of the Singing men, rent some of their Surplices, Gownes, and Bibles, and carryed away others, mangled all our Service-bookes, and Books of Common-prayer, bestrewing the whole Pavement with the Leaves thereof: A miserable spectacle to all good eyes.

But as if all this had been too little to satisfie the fury of some indiscreete Zealots among them (for many did abhorre what was done already) they further exercised their malice upon the Arras hangings in the Quire, representing the whole Story of our Saviour; wherein observing divers figures of Christ (I tremble to express their Blasphemies) one said, here is Christ, and swore that he would stab him; another said, here is Christ, and swore that he would rip up his bowels, which they did accordingly, so farre as the Figures were capable thereof, besides many other villanies: And not content therewith, finding another Statue of Christ in the Frontispiece of the South-Gate, they discharged against it, forty shot at the least, triumphing much when they did hit it in the head or face, as if they were resolved to Crucifie him againe in his Figure, whom they could not hurt in Truth.

It may strike us as baffling that these religiously inspired soldiers displayed such hostility to the figure of the very Christ in whom they claimed to believe. But for them the target was not Christ himself but the image of Christ, indeed any image regarded by them as idolatrous. It was then, it seems, some of the local Canterbury towns-people who completed the work begun by Colonel Sandys's troops, and pulled down the battered 'Statue of Christ in the Frontispiece of the South-Gate' later that year. The

rather gaunt replacement statue which is now visible in the centre niche of Chist Church Gate was finally erected there only in 1990.

Later, we can consider what also happened to the twelfth-century windows in the cathedral and the theological justifications for iconoclasm, but now, as indicating a further aspect of the shift signalled by the Reformation, we can look again at the image of the whole gate shown earlier.

Visible above and running parallel to those aristocratic coats of arms on the façade is a line of carved angels, each one carrying a shield, which might also be seen as coats of arms.

What is actually represented on the shields are the 'Emblems of the Passion', several objects traditionally associated with the final sufferings of Jesus Christ, as recounted in the gospels, which would have been familiar to anyone passing the gate in the 1520s. On one angel's shield, for example, are three dice, which recall the soldiers gambling for Christ's seamless robe, which is itself visible on another shield, while a third shield shows three nails used in the crucifixion, echoing the three dice. Also depicted on other shields are the cock which signalled the three-fold betrayal of Peter, the crown of thorns, the pillar and the whip used in the scourging, the staff and sponge of vinegar, and the spear, all of which evoke details mentioned in the accounts of the passion and death of Jesus.

The relationship between the gospel accounts and these once-familiar but now often unrecognised or puzzling images is complex. Since we can all now, if we wish, easily find a copy of the New Testament and read those accounts for ourselves, we perhaps assume that these 'emblems' are a kind of pictorial illustration of the texts. In many medieval manuscripts and early printed versions, however, this set of images is not accompanied by the gospel text at all, but they act rather as an alternative to that text, in several

senses. Quite literally, they appeal to a different sense: these are visual objects, for the eye, while the text of the gospel was primarily encountered by ear, recited during the 'lessons' of the Mass and, since most people couldn't understand Latin or read for themselves, as told in sermons.

The emblems are not organised as a sequence, following the narrative order of the gospels, but displayed as separate images, each of which can therefore be associated more or less freely with any other image in the set, as the eye roves over them all, taken together. Moreover, it is the inner eye, the mental imagination, that is primarily brought into play: the emblems are not so much literal illustrations as designed to encourage and stimulate personal meditation or contemplation upon different aspects of the sufferings of Jesus, an exercise of private devotional imagination. In one common version, the emblems of the passion are arranged around a central depiction of the Pieta or Mater Dolorosa, the sorrowing mother Mary with the dead Jesus on her lap, and the arrangement serves to prompt multiple connections between the images, a kind of visual hyper-text linking them together. We also find the same set of images on the roof-beams of churches, above the heads of the congregation, sometimes in a form very similar to those on the gate: angels carrying shields.

In these cases we can recognise their function as aids to prayer, especially for those unable to read the gospels for themselves. They are more than simple reminders of the gospel text but rather prompts to elaborate the meanings of the remembered story, to re-imagine specific sufferings of Jesus, even an invitation to picture oneself undergoing such suffering, in an emotional and thoughtful identification with Christ. They fit very well with that devotional movement which produced the well-known prayer-book *The Imitation of Christ* and anticipate much later meditational practices, such as the *Spiritual Exercises* of Ignatius Loyola. The role of devotional images is one of those aspects of religious belief and practice which underwent a profound change in the cultural shifts associated with the Reformation, as part of a much longer and complex history of how we relate to images in general, as we will see later.

However, when positioned on the front of a gateway these 'emblems of the passion' surely have a distinctly odd status. It's hard to imagine anyone going through or past the gateway actually pausing in order to meditate upon these images. Though Richard Culmer, a fierce Canterbury iconoclast, complained that 'foreigners' (he meant 'Roman' Catholics) used occasionally to kneel down in the street to pay their respects to the statue of Christ on the gate, and that was what justified for Culmer the soldiers' attack upon it. Yet these passion instruments, in all their detail, and particularly given their height above the ground, are surely not primarily intended to prompt devotion, to function as aids to spontaneous prayer in the street, but rather — like the aristocratic coats of arms on the gate — to act as 'blazons', as indicators of status, identity, and ownership: this, they

proclaim, is the gate of Christ's own Church, the Christ Church Gate, and these are his 'marks'.

One of the most striking features of the famous tomb of the Black Prince, inside the cathedral, is that suspended above it are the 'trophies' or 'achievements' of the dead warrior: his coat of arms, his shield, chain-mail, tunic, gauntlets, and weapons. Those hanging there today are modern replicas, but the originals, now in a glass case nearby, were themselves probably not actual battlefield equipment but decorative versions designed for display. Even actual coats of arms were, in real life, beginning to lose their military function, of identifying in the heat of battle an ally or an enemy. The shield as a recognition device was becoming, by the seventeenth century, almost primarily a status symbol and an accoutrement to such fashionable sports as the tournament. In any case they were not much protection against muskets and cannon balls. Coats of arms were already on the way to becoming the concern of hobbyist students of heraldry. Yet perhaps in these 'devices' carried by angels we can still recognise an echo of a tournament with the devil, and Christ's successful breaching of the very gates of Hell, Christ as Warrior.

However, if you consult, for example, the illustration of an early printed example of these 'emblems of the passion' in a typical modern publication, the Victoria and Albert Museum's *Medieval Treasury,* you will probably find that the text accompanying the picture of the emblems is almost wholly concerned, not with explaining their devotional function or their relation to the gospel story, but with establishing the date, the possible originality, the provenance, the painterly craftsmanship, of these coloured images. They are treated as rare and valuable objects of 'art', on display to arouse aesthetic appreciation but certainly not to prompt meditative piety. Admittedly, one can hardly imagine even the most devout visitor going down on their knees before a display case in the V&A.

Such shifts in the functions and meanings of images, and of texts, are aspects of the complex cultural changes which partly shape the concerns of this essay. Indeed, one way of thinking about this overall project is that it offers a further adaptation or modification of the practice of 'meditating' upon objects, with the cathedral itself as a focus for our imaginative response. But what then is an appropriate 'response'? Is the cathedral primarily another work of art, a photogenic trio of towers, a 'sight' for tourists, a decorative display?

capitalism and clocks

A second social force often associated with the long-term impact of the Reformation was economic rather than theological or aesthetic. When we come to consider the cathedral Treasury, later, we can think about the complex relations between religion and finance, between medieval notions of usury and early modern capitalism, and the dissolution of the

monasteries as, from different perspectives, variously regarded as an appropriation, a nationalisation, or a privatisation of enormous assets. For now, however, one symptomatic moment is worth pondering.

Here is an extract from *'The Reminiscences of the Rev. George Gilbert'*, a manuscript in the cathedral library, as edited by Rev. John Shirley and privately printed in 1938:

> My father was one day in the Bank of Simmonds and Gipps at the corner of St Margaret's Street. Alderman Simmons & Jesse White were present. The exact time of day was asked by the Alderman who said 'If those d— turrets of the Cathedral gate were away we sh'd see the Church Clock from the Bank door! Can't you pull them down Jesse?' 'It shall be done', replied Jesse: & it was done. They were reported to be insecure & too heavy for the gate! that solid mass! & Jesse's words were believed, & down they came!

James Simmons was the senior alderman of the city and one of its most respected businessmen. He was Mayor of Canterbury in 1776 and again in 1788, founded the *Kentish Gazette* newspaper, and was MP for Canterbury in 1806. Jesse White had been appointed Surveyor of the Cathedral in 1797 and was Surveyor of the City Works in 1798-9. A tablet to the memory of Jesse White is on the east wall of the cloisters — unless it has been torn off by some like-minded vandal. Clearly, by the late eighteenth century, the demands of business and banking were rather more important to the city fathers, and even to the Cathedral Surveyor himself, than the survival of the cathedral fabric.

That *Illustrated London News* drawing from 1874 shows the gate without its turrets. They were finally replaced, by more or less exact replicas, as part of the 1930s restoration, though — like the angels' shields and the coats of arms — such turrets had by then acquired a changed significance, now regarded simply as photogenic signs of a period, 'the Past', or, to use a more recent vogue term, 'Heritage'. There was no functional rationale for turrets by 1937. It was a banker's demand to see the correct time which prompted Alderman Simmons's architectural vandalism and the relation between capitalism and clocks would be worth further exploration. Time itself, over time, has arguably changed its significance, like the turrets. The great bell in the Cathedral central tower, now called Bell Harry, used to toll the hours, but the primary meaning of 'hours' for the monastic community was not the enumeration of fixed intervals during each day but the 'canonical' or liturgical sense of hours, the daily and nightly round of prayer services which will concern us when we think about the Choir.

The rhythm of the Christian year, with its weekly Sabbath and its annual liturgical cycle, was modified by the Reformation movement, including the abolition of its many feast-days and 'holy days' designated in honour of a long roll-call of saints. The very term 'festival', like 'holiday', now has

different connotations. As it happens, the rooms above the gateway, where small windows are visible, were until recently mainly used as the administrative offices of the 'Canterbury Festival': a few weeks of cultural and entertainment events every autumn, which gesture towards a civic calendar of community celebration, however artificial or commercialised, and thereby tries to extend the tourist summer season. That the cathedral now attracts 'tourists' to 'festivals' on 'holiday' instead of pilgrims on 'feasts' or 'holy' days is a further aspect of that long reformation. How we think about, and experience, the rhythms of time will be a recurring motif in our reflections upon history.

1935 festival

The *Canterbury Cathedral Chronicle* for July 1935 records the 'Unveiling and Blessing' of the partly refurbished Christ Church Gate, still without its turrets, as part of the opening of the 1935 Canterbury Festival. After the Blessing ceremony the Archbishop, Cosmo Gordon Lang, was guest of honour at a special performance of a new drama commissioned by the Festival, T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Thomas Becket's murder and martyrdom, once the focus of both devotion and deep ideological division, was now the subject of a festival play. In an address, delivered at the Gate, the Archbishop made a two-fold appeal:

> No doubt there is something left to be done. I notice the old turrets do not stand as yet above the parapets. Is it too bold to suggest that two Friends may be found who would be proud of the honour of restoring the old design? So, once again we would have a gateway worthy of the dignity and the beauty of the Cathedral to which it leads. May I express the hope that those responsible for the buildings here in Burgate, which surround the gateway, and more especially those in the immediate neighbourhood of the gateway, will ever refrain from exposing to sight and to the eyes of those who approach, anything that jars on its beauty ?

A note in the same issue of the *Chronicle* recorded with satisfaction that the Archbishop's first plea, for new turrets, had been almost immediately successful:

> A munificent gift of £3,200 has been made since the Festival by a Friend of the Cathedral in order to make possible the addition of the two turrets for which the Archbishop asked at the unveiling ceremony. The beauty of the repaired gateway made it, in the minds of many, look more than ever like a mutilated stump. The turrets did not fall down from decay; they were deliberately pulled down, and the Dean and Chapter have decided that they may be replaced. The donor wishes this

gift to be anonymous and the name is known only to the Archbishop, the Dean and Miss Babington.

By 1937 the turrets were back in place. In late 1939 the angels' shields were finally re-painted to the designs of the eminent art historian E. W. Tristram. The great gate was complete once more. At last.

And yet. The Archbishop's second plea, that developments in the Burgate would not mar the beauty of the gate, had a grim aftermath. On 31st May 1942, almost exactly three hundred years since the violent visit of Colonel Sandys' destructive troopers, much of the Burgate street was reduced to rubble in a German bombing raid which targeted the cathedral. The cathedral survived, including, it might be noted, its many monuments to war, not least the tomb of the Black Prince and an entire chapel dedicated to the warrior archangel St Michael. The newly renovated gate also survived. The main casualty was the library building, though most of its books and precious archives had been safely stored elsewhere.

Gates, any more than shields, cannot keep out bombs. But you need a gate if you have a border, a boundary, any form of barrier, and a wall around a monastery could be defensive, to keep out such unwelcome intruders (at least to any sincerely celibate monks) as seductive women, or such dangerous visitors as marauding Vikings, or aggressive Puritans, but also on occasion angry towns-people, or even rival monks from the other great monastery that used to be in Canterbury, St. Augustine's. The great gate was not merely an ornament or a memorial but an entry into a sacred space. Now it is the ticket office where you pay to go in.

sanctuary

One function of the walled area around the cathedral was to create a safe haven not just for the monks themselves but as a 'sanctuary' which could temporarily provide shelter and protection, according to the customs of the period, to some categories of fleeing criminals. At the core of this notion of 'sanctuary' was, literally, the idea that this space inside the perimeter walls surrounding and including the cathedral building was sacred and dedicated to God.

An incident, recorded in the archives, illustrates the force of that notion. On 12th June 1337 the prior of the monastery wrote to the Archbishop, then in London, concerning an 'affray' in the cathedral churchyard, and to inform him that blood-shed had occurred, thereby so polluting the entire grounds that religious services had to be suspended until the pollution was 'rectified'. So Prior Oxenden asked permission to invite the Bishop of Rochester to 'reconcile' the sacred soil of the yard. The archbishop replied on 24th June, reproving the prior for the rhetorical verbosity of his dramatic account, but agreeing. It then transpired that, according to several of the monks, what had actually occurred was simply a nose-bleed, and they

had themselves chosen to continue with the liturgical offices anyway, whatever the prior's views. The prior promptly sought expensive legal advice about their disobedient behaviour. An elaborate legal *Memorandum* was drawn up concerning the arrangements which had to be made for the coming of the Bishop of Rochester to remove the 'pollution' and the Bishop was formally required to declare that his task on this occasion would not in future serve as any kind of precedent, either for him to interfere in the doings of the monastery or for the monks to have the right to call upon him again. On that basis he was allowed to proceed, and the reconciliation, the removal of the 'pollution', was duly reported on 4th July 1337 in a further elaborate letter to the Archbishop.

Now consider: if a mere nose-bleed in the cathedral yard could cause such dismay, suspension of services, legal dispute, and talk of desecration, think what the shedding of Archbishop Becket's blood within the church itself in 1170 had meant: not only murder and pollution but scandalous blasphemy and sacrilege. However, that the precincts as a 'sacred' area lay outside normal secular jurisdiction also meant that part of the space could be used for such literally 'privi-leged' activities as fairs and markets, which might thereby escape the taxes and regulations of the local civic authorities, to the profit of the monks as well as the traders and the local townspeople. Another part of the area was a cemetery for Canterbury citizens, and a source of burial fees for the monks.

One trade in particular has often found sanctuary within cathedral precincts, a trade which at times has verged (in the eyes of the authorities) on criminal activity. There is a long association between the printing trade and cathedral spaces. Not simply because booksellers, who in the early years were often their own publishers and printers, found ready customers among the clergy attached to cathedrals and their schools — in Paris especially the area around Notre Dame — but also because the printing and selling of books could involve conflict with those who sought to suppress such dangerous products, not least, at times, the unauthorised printing of the bible itself.

Until the Second World War the area around St Paul's cathedral in London was still the centre of the English publishing business, and in one bombing raid targeted on the cathedral over a million books were burned. It is perhaps appropriate that an early full-scale attempt somehow to capture an English cathedral in a printed book was William Dugdale's magnificent *History of St Paul's Cathedral*, with its splendid illustrations by Wenceslas Hollar, intended as a record of the mediaeval cathedral in case of its possible destruction by the Cromwell regime. The splendid folio was published in 1658 — just a few years before that old St Paul's cathedral was instead totally destroyed in the Great London Fire of 1666.

One of those whose coat of arms appears on the Canterbury Christ Church Gate is the notorious Cardinal Wolsey. He was the subject of a biting satire by the clergyman and court poet John Skelton, who had once

been young Prince Arthur's tutor. As a result of provoking the Cardinal's wrath, Skelton apparently sought sanctuary in the precincts of Westminster Abbey, where he would have had at least one friendly acquaintance, the first printer in England, William Caxton, who it is dubiously claimed to have once had a house in Canterbury. Skelton had collaborated with Caxton on a translation of what survived of the 'Universal History', the *Bibliotheca historica*, of Diodorus Siculus. (It's incidentally another index of those changing times that Skelton seems to have put into printed circulation more 'new' English words than any author except Shakspeare.) Skelton was eventually reconciled with Wolsey, even as the Cardinal himself lost his position with Henry VIII for failing to resolve the issue of Henry's hoped-for divorce from Catherine.

It was one more aspect of the long reformation that printed books were to play such a crucial role in the spread of the new religious ideologies. One aspect of the shift from medieval to renaissance modes is visible in the changing relations between images and texts, not least because of changing levels of literacy. The written text had always had what we still call 'authority', but the impact of print arguably increased not just the accessibility but also the authority of the written word.

Believing in a book, in what was written down, is one element in the sensibility of those who believed in the literal sense of *the* Book, 'the bible' or 'biblos', the sacred writings. Whereas medieval and especially monastic commentators on the bible were arguably much more flexibly attuned to a multiplicity of meanings, of several not necessarily complementary or even compatible senses of scripture. We can return to such topics later, but for now we can at least note that were it nor for the engrained trust in the printed text, Somner's erroneous statement about the date inscribed on the gate might not have been copied quite so trustingly. If so, this opening section of my essay would have been different. Such are the vagaries of writing history.

So, this meandering introductory sampler, focussed on and opening into both the cathedral and the book, has given some idea of what follows and how these considerations are organised. I have attached to various parts of the cathedral a kind of secular meditation, exploring themes and issues I associate with that segment of the building: the nave with 'history', the treasury with economics, Archbishop Pecham's tomb with science, the windows with art and iconoclasm, and so on. That a stroll around Canterbury cathedral prompts, encourages, and rewards such meandering considerations seems to me part of why we can have several complex and rich responses underlying our often only half-aware experience of wandering through the building. At some level of attention our 'half-formed thoughts' can range very widely indeed — and taking a photo doesn't capture those thoughts.

Let me return to the speech by the Archbishop at the opening celebration for the partly restored gateway in 1935. He ended, as one might expect, on a spiritual note:

> The gateway of the Church of Christ, Canterbury: it is indeed a high title, but may we not give it a title even higher? If Heaven be, as we ought surely to conceive it, the realm of the spirit of truth and goodness and beauty, of all those imponderable and indestructible values of human life, of the things unseen and eternal, to which the cathedral has given its age-long witness, then may we not say of this gateway that it is a Gate of Heaven? In veneration of its history, in admiration of its beauty, in thankfulness for its restoration, I now formally unveil it and commit it to the protection of Almighty God.

While agreeing in my own way with such sentiments of veneration, admiration, and thankfulness, as I explore this extra-ordinary building with its ramified associations, it will become clear that I regard the concepts of 'heaven' and of the 'realm of the spirit', and indeed that of 'Almighty God', as profoundly problematic.

Nevertheless the Archbishop articulated something that will recur in these considerations. A gate is, by definition, an odd kind of entity, an interface or inter-section between one area and another, yet the gate itself is 'in' neither one nor the other space. That was perhaps one reason why the 1930s repair of this gate could not be financed out of normal cathedral expenditure: it was not quite part of the cathedral and required separate fund-raising. Nor was it the financial responsibility of the city. Precisely as the passage-way between the two, it occupied a strange status.

The gate into the cathedral was once believed to be the point where a pilgrim left secular space and time and passed over, as it were, into sacred space and time. In that respect, the choice of a gate as a memorial for the dead Prince Arthur was appropriate, since death itself can in some cultures and belief-systems be thought of as a form of passage-way, a transition space, a threshold between two forms of existence. As the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein once laconically remarked: 'death is not an event *in* life'.

If we think of the cathedral itself in terms of 'events', and its various moments of building and re-building, we may find ourselves just as puzzled by the notion of 'event' as by that of death. That apparently innocent question, 'How old is it?', whether asked of the gate or of the cathedral itelf, yields no simple answer. Whatever the date inscribed on it, the gate, like the rest of the cathedral, exists not in the 1520s, or the 1330s, or the 1930s, but 'now' — and yet it is partly because it has persisted or existed for so long that so many visitors are drawn into it.

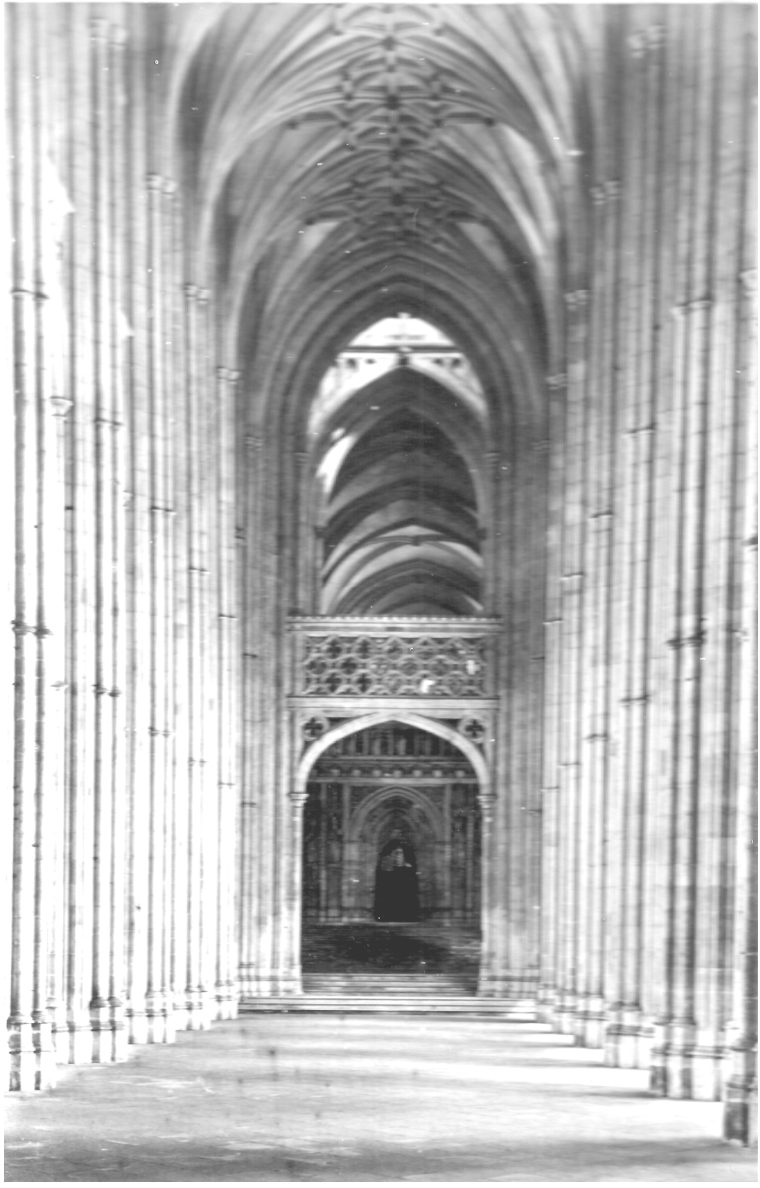
We can continue our exploration of the cathedral in the nave and with the question of history. But the puzzle of the interface between areas will

also eventually figure in relation to several other kinds of intersection: those between church and state, or time and time-lessness, or science and religion, or even between different disciplines and ways of thinking. The versions of christian faith which this building has embodied have helped to give shape, within a particular culture, to a set of concepts and problems which, even for those who are no longer at home within the world of that or any faith, remain deeply influential. Considering this magnificent cathedral is one way of trying to come to terms with some of those concepts and problems.

It is time to wander inside . .

.

NAVE



first impressions

I sat in the nave this morning, quietly watching the tourists. Most looked pretty lost. It's not that they couldn't find their way around. After all, the nave is only a large hall with a couple of side aisles. Or that they didn't know where they were, though it was quite early and some of them seemed still half-asleep. But many had an air of mild disorientation, of wandering aimlessly in an alien location. Even those with an audio-guide had that faintly baffled look of people not quite sure what they're supposed to be doing.

There are, I suppose, several recognisable types. I'm not sure which I am myself when I visit some other cathedral or tourist site. There's the conscientious school-kids, ticking off boxes on their finding charts, or puzzling over ground-plans. Or the ostentatiously indifferent sixth-formers, carefully casual about the whole thing, responding to that unmissable phone text while sauntering down the centre aisle. There's the inevitable tour party in sensible shoes and cautiously unnecessary raincoats, which they now wish they had left behind on the coach.

Almost everyone takes photos, repeatedly, but also rather perfunctorily. The eyes focus on framing the target for a few seconds, then a decisive click, a quick glance to check that the vista, tomb, or window, has been properly captured, and then on to the next photo-friendly spot. I remember a professional tourist guide who claimed the record for Canterbury Cathedral: thirteen minutes from off the coach to everybody back on board. "Just enough time for the photos," he said.

Yet before these roles are assumed, there's a moment when something else is registered, however briefly. After people enter from the porch for the first time and turn right to find themselves suddenly facing the perspective of the whole nave, the almost uniform reaction is to walk a few steps into the main aisle and then come to a standstill, or slow their walk to a crawl, as they look up and around and down the nave. At that point, the most common response is simply to stop. With some palpable sense of awe.

In the old days, people tried to put their reaction into words, not photos. Here's the Romantic poet Coleridge around 1790, speaking about the impact on him of a Gothic cathedral:

> The Greek art is beautiful. When I enter a Greek church, my eye is charmed, and my mind elated; I feel exalted, and proud that I am a man. But the Gothic art is sublime. On entering a cathedral, I am filled with devotion and with awe; I am lost to the actualities that surround me, and my whole being expands into the infinite; earth and air, nature and art, all swell up into eternity, and the only sensible impression left, is, 'that I am nothing!'

A few years earlier, the Canterbury cleric William Gostling in his 1774 guide book, *A Walk in and about the City of Canterbury*, made some remarks on the nave which might get him into trouble these days, though I don't think he meant any offence:

> We now enter the body of the church by the porch at the foot of the Oxford steeple, in company, I will suppose, with some of our colonists, just arrived from America on their first visit to England; persons blessed by providence with a capacity to be struck with the sight of what is grand and beautiful, without troubling themselves to consider whether the grandeur and beauty with which they are charmed be owing to the rules of Grecian or Gothic architecture.
>
> At the first entrance with such into this noble structure, how have I enjoyed their astonishment! How have I seen the countenance even of their negroes sparkle with raptures of pleasure and admiration! Raptures which no language but that of the eyes is capable of expressing.
>
> The fine arches over head, so moderately adorned with well proportioned ornaments; the lofty pillars, so well disposed for distributing that light which the windows admit in great plenty; and the agreeable length of the walk between them which augments the pleasure of it.

In 1821 the architectural historian John Britton attempted this account:

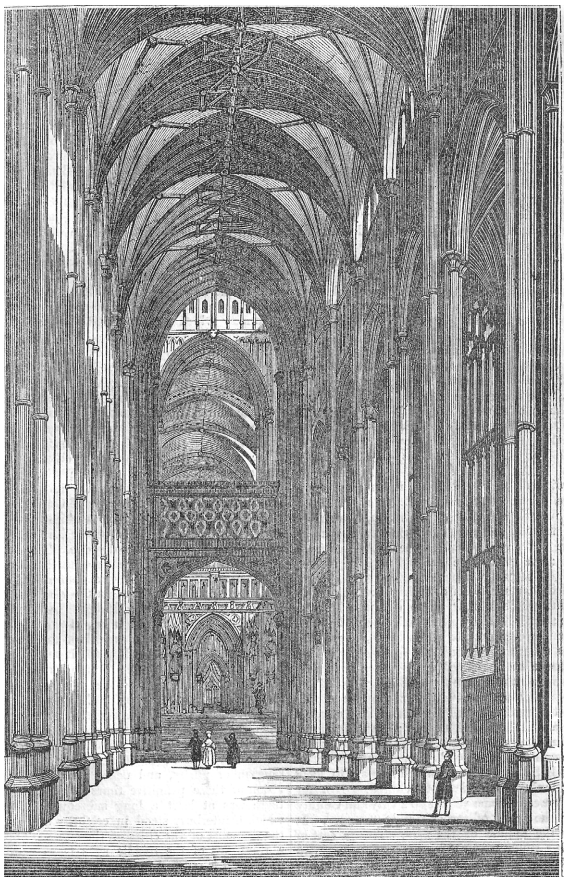
> On entering the church, from the south porch, the stranger is immediately impressed with the loftiness, narrowness, solidity of piers and arches, and uniform beauty and harmony of the nave and its aisles. On each side of the nave is a series of nine clustered columns or piers, sustaining the walls of the triforium, which is closed except by a few small openings. Over these is a row of clerestory windows. The aisles are lofty and narrow, and the windows partake of the same character; but the whole is marked by solidity and strength . . .

But Britton's comment fades away from the initial impression, and he rapidly assumes the familiar tone of the architectural guide, pointing to the mode of construction and referring us to a diagram of measured dimensions and proportions.

The nave of a cathedral is no longer the largest enclosed space we are familiar with (perhaps especially if we're 'colonists' from America). Airport terminals and railways stations are often at least as large. Yet what seems initially compelling or somehow awesome about this space is the combination of sheer volume and complete emptiness. Most often the nave only has rows of empty chairs, which reinforces the sense of a void, since so much of the entire space is taken up with, quite simply, empty air.

I'm not going to attempt any rhetorical flights myself, but nor can I easily give you an image that captures what most intrigues and attracts me about the nave. A photo, even by Frith, is necessarily of the physical material of the nave, the pillars, the roof, the solid bits, whereas I think it's also the sheer emptiness that makes people pause. And it is difficult to photograph absence..

A print perhaps conveys that emptiness somewhat better than a photo, so maybe look at this print for a moment and register the scale of the figures.



When you enter the nave without even any chairs in it, and you can see the whole flagged floor, the impact of an entire structure of stone and air left almost vacant is even more striking. Your own presence within the space seems to make little impression. Yet the overall height and length is not so enormous as to be beyond comprehension: you can take in the dimensions at a glance, and within a few moments can adjust to a kind of comfortable scale.

The exactly measured drawings which John Britton made of the inner ratios of the entire cathedral might even help explain this sense of human scale or proportion. Gostling simply but rightly called it 'agreeable'.

entering history

I occasionally ask people what they think they are reacting to when they first respond to the nave. One common reply talks about being in a glade, or a clearing in a wood, as if the central aisle were an avenue of tall trees, with the pillars stretching down the vista of the nave like the oaks of some primaeval forest, while the traceried vaulting above is like the entwined upper branches of ancient trees arching overhead… Some people can get quite carried away with this image! At the root (excuse the metaphor) of this quite common response is perhaps some sense of pre-history, evoking buried folk memories. Though any such recall, I suspect, is derived not from deep traces in a shared species psyche or alleged universal unconscious, but rather from half-remembered movie epics or illustrations in forgotten childhood books. My own subliminally insistent memory is of the great artificial forest of towering trees in Fritz Lang's early film *Die Nibelungen: Siegfried*.

Other visitors offer a comparison with a ship, as if the eye had momentarily flipped the vertical dimension of the nave and we are looking at the inside of a large vessel, with the converging arches of the roof as the visible inner ribs of a keel, and the great stone pillars as the wooden struts of some huge upside-down boat. A poet friend, Alan Wall, once offered a nice variation on this idea. He said he felt like Jonah:

> notating the inside of the whale's cathedral
> the mighty ribwork of the nave ...

Somewhere at the back of the mind is perhaps the ancient Christian notion of the church, the *ecclesia*, as itself a ship, a kind of Noah's ark, with no salvation outside it. That image underpins the very term 'nave', the Latin for 'ship' being *navis*.

Perhaps the most intriguing comment people make, which can take various forms, is that in walking into this space they are somehow 'entering into history'. I remember a school-girl whispering to her friend: "Doesn't it just *smell* of history!" What people seem to be registering is not simply that the building is old, but that its age is many-layered, reaching back into different periods, yet also including, embracing, and somehow incorporating, our own present, our very presence at this moment, as yet another layer in that enfolding history. We have stepped from the familiar present of the city outside not into 'a past' but into a different kind of present, composed partly of the past, and somehow of many pasts.

This sense of 'entering history' seems close to the core of why so many people today come to visit the cathedral at all. It's one of those elusive 'half-formed thoughts' which the cathedral provokes. Yet aren't we already 'in history' ? Yes, but . . .

succession

How do we think of history? There's a panel on the wall just after the entrance from the porch, which few visitors notice, since it's tucked into a corner on your left as you enter. There's also a corresponding panel in the far north-west corner, so that the two tablets flank the main doorway in the west wall, and eventually that farther panel does get noticed by a fair number of visitors. Each panel is a wall-mounted tablet or plaque with a series of dates and names. The list on the south-west panel is identified as those of the Deans and Priors of Christ Church (one name for the old monastic complex), while that on the north-west slab lists the Archbishops of Canterbury through the centuries.

You see people pause and begin to read these lists, perhaps commenting on the oddity of some of the names. Or sometimes wondering aloud at the antiquity of the dates, which in the list of Deans begin at 830 A.D. with the name 'Ceolnoth', and for the Archbishops with 'Saint Augustine' in 597 A.D. The unpronounceable name 'Ceolnoth' also figures in the list of Archbishops, at 833 A.D. Here's just part of each sequence:

S. AVGVSTINE	A.D.	597
LAVRENTIVS		604
MELLITVS		619
IVSTVS		624
HONORIVS		627
DEVSDEDIT		655
THEODORE		668
BRIHTWALD		693

And:

CEOLNOTH	A.D.	820
AEGELWYN		830
ALFRIC		
KENSYN		
MAVRICE		
AELFWYN		930
ALSINE		933

Some early dates are simply missing. Visitors might recognise a few saints' names among the list of Archbishops, but only a handful of them: Augustine, Dunstan, Alphege, Anselm, Becket, and perhaps Edmund.

A few visitors are puzzled by the name of Saint Augustine at the top of the Archbishops list, since they don't realise that this is not *the* St Augustine, the great African Doctor of the Church, Augustine of Hippo, author of the famous *Confessions* and the *City of God*, but instead — well, another Saint Augustine, who 'founded' the cathedral in 597 A.D., after he was sent to England by Pope Gregory the Great.

The obvious point is that the great majority of these names mean absolutely nothing to almost all the visitors who stand in front of them— unless they've already done some diligent research, have a very good guide-book with them, or take out their smart-phone and access an online encyclopaedia. Without that, the individual names are pretty meaningless and people soon wander away from the panels. Yet the general sense of these lists seems clear enough: that what we're looking at is a very long 'succession' of people, one coming after the other for many many years. Visitors will react differently to the length of time involved. European tourists, from Italy or Greece or France, clearly don't regard A.D. 597 as particularly remarkable, whereas some American visitors may be rather more impressed. However, the intriguing aspect of these lists for me isn't the significance of the specific dates or names so much as this representation of a repeated 'succession'.

One deeply familiar way of thinking about 'history' is indeed as some kind of 'succession'. Perhaps our image is that of a roll-call of kings and queens, each trekking through the dates of their own reign, barely remembered from school history lessons. Or more generally the idea of a 'succession' of ages or periods, each summed up in some pithily descriptive phrase: the Classical Period, followed by the Dark Ages, or the Middle Ages, followed in turn by the Protestant Reformation, then the Enlightenment, the Industrial Revolution, and so on. On a larger scale we might talk about the 'age of the dinosaurs', or the Palaeolithic period, or the Bronze Age, or perhaps a sequence of empires, 'succeeding' each other: Ancient Egypt, Ancient China, the Persian Empire, the Roman Empire. Whether as chapters in an elementary text-book, as the titles of block-buster arts exhibitions, or of lavish television documentary series, the notion of such phases 'succeeding' each other is utterly familiar and can almost seem to be self-explanatory, just like names organised on a list.

Yet what precisely is this notion of 'succession'? At one date on a panel 'Augustine' was called the 'Archbishop of Canterbury' and much lower down in the same list, at another date on the plaque, 'Matthew Parker' was also called the 'Archbishop of Canterbury'. Yet this may tell us remarkably little, once we begin to wonder whether what it meant to be an 'Archbishop' in the 6th century A.D. was at all similar to what it meant to be an Archbishop a thousand years later, let alone whether the 'Canterbury' of that title remained the same place or even the same sort of place between, say, 597 and 1997.

If 'history' is represented as a sequence, a succession of dates, is our own relation to 'history' that of taking our place, occupying a slot, somewhere within a continuous line of dates? Is that really how we think of history? Yet, surely, my own life-time is the only 'history' I personally have, and will have, experienced. The dates that (will) constitute the span of my own life are not, and cannot be, for me, quite the same kind of time as the many thousands of dates that have preceded me or will come after me. This is my only time, even if the other times are also 'history'. This time, this now, is the only history I know, as it were, from the inside.

Yet how does my personal 'history' connect with, or perhaps intersect with, that 'history' summarised on those tablets of dates? Could 'I' have been present at some radically other moment or distant date in history, inserted into the sequence at some quite other point within this 'succession'? And when my own death occurs, will I simply figure – if at all – as yet another name on a possible list, as others 'succeed' me?

As it happens, one or two of the more recent names on the lists of Deans are of people I know or once knew. Their names evoke personal memories and resonate for me quite differently from the other names on those lists, names I only know 'from history'. And some people I once knew who are now dead are commemorated elsewhere in the cathedral. They are among the numerous dead, who are – as we slowly begin to realise – recorded on the extraordinary number of other memorial tablets arranged around the nave. These tablets listing successive Deans and Archbishops are only a prelude to an extraordinary assemblage of memorials to the dead.

One of the reasons why visitors to the cathedral can appear unsure of what counts as appropriate behaviour is that while the building is obviously a church most visitors are not here for a church service, and although we are strolling around looking at what might be regarded as a miscellany of art-works, we are not in a museum or gallery either. It may take a little while for us to recognise that we are definitely in an indoor cemetery. So the kind of silence which falls upon (most!) visitors is a strange mixture of reverence, respect, and even a certain unease.

We are not just entering into history but into the realm of the dead. Then, as we realise that we are walking inside a cemetery, we also soon register that these many memorials to the dead are far from arranged in any neat 'succession' or linear sequence of dates. But how, we might ask, are the dead 'arranged' anyway?

empty time

There is a compressed and somewhat puzzling remark by the German Jewish writer Walter Benjamin, just before he committed suicide in 1940, trying to escape from the Nazis:

> The concept of historical progress cannot be sundered from the concept of its passage through homogeneous, empty time.

Benjamin was thinking primarily about what was meant by 'progress', and how that might be a misleading assumption, even a politically dangerous one in the mid-1930s. But he was also suggesting that one of our most basic notions is of historical time as somehow waiting to be filled. Like the nave itself, the 'space' of history is thought of as initially empty, to be occupied one after another by those who figure in such lists of 'succession', perhaps calibrated against a table of dates, those apparently uniform units of time. But is 'history' really made up of people walking in the footsteps of others, and sitting in chairs they have vacated?

It may be appealing to imagine the nave itself as a boat sailing majestically through history, with ourselves momentarily inside it, passengers on a moving ship. But is there really some uniform time, a sea of dates waiting to be filled in, like the blank slots on a calendar, an empty time through which this mainly empty nave is also proceeding, with us within it as we stand or sit and look around us? If people 'succeed' each other, so that a change of date indicates a change of personnel, what is the continuity, what is the continuing 'history' within which these changes occur? Is it simply the very process of one person or generation 'taking the place' of another that is most deeply meant by 'history'?

I am reasonably sure that tomorrow this nave will fill up again, though with different visitors. Is the nave itself a kind of space 'in' time, with different individuals 'succeeding' one another as its brief inhabitants? But in what sort of time is it possible for one person to 're-place' another, to take their place? If we think of the previous occupants of that place or time as having 'vacated' it, are we now appealing to the image of an empty chair, as in rows of empty chairs lined up in the nave itself, or the chair of the archbishop in the cathedral, which is normally empty except during occasional religious services?

It's that archiepiscopal chair or throne which gives us the very term 'cathedral', from *cathedra*, a chair, the 'seat' of an archbishop. The Latin phrase used for the times when no Archbishop had been appointed was *sede vacante* – 'the seat being vacant' – but are we to think of historical time itself as comprising a general *sede vacante*, history as an empty time waiting to be occupied? When we try to think about history in that way, it seems rather peculiar or even baffling. Yet we speak not only of 'entering history' but of history 'passing' – into what? Where has history gone? Into a kind of nothing-ness, an empty time, however 'full' of something we call 'history'?

The issue raised by Walter Benjamin is elusive. Is our familiar sense of history as a matter of 'succession' actually far from self-explanatory? Do I really think of myself as somehow 'succeeding' the people who have preceded me, not just in any particular job or function but in historical time itself, whatever that means? Have I been occupying an otherwise 'empty'

slot in history which will shortly be filled by someone else? If I hadn't been born would that 'slot' have remained 'empty' or been 'filled' by someone else? Or is my time always peculiarly my own time which no-one else could have had, or occupied, or lived? My children may well 'succeed' me as owners of my house, and of this comfortable armchair in the library in which I am now writing. But surely they cannot 'succeed' or 'inherit' my *time* as if it were something they might occupy in my place, instead of me. Isn't my time strictly my own, not just some otherwise empty time I happen to be filling, a moment 'in' what we call 'history'?

Of course, most sane visitors are not likely to be held up for very long by such fleeting considerations, even if standing for any length of time in front of these panels of successive names provokes either puzzlement or indifference. Yet, even as we turn aside to wander the rest of the nave, such questions don't quite go away.

tombs and memorials

Most people, after a few moments of adjustment, saunter slowly down the nave's central aisle, perhaps pausing to look at the baptismal font, or the pulpit, or turning to gaze back at the great West Window. Then they almost always drift towards a side aisle. What catches the eye and draws them over are the various tombs and memorial plaques along the outer wall of each aisle. As with the wall tablets listing the deans and archbishops, people tend to pause and begin to read the inscriptions on the tombs and plaques. Many are in Latin, and fairly meaning-less to most visitors, but enough are in English or sufficiently clear in their general sense, while the visual elements of some tomb effigies are pretty obvious.

Let me select a few examples, from those I most often notice people pausing to look at. Unlike the lists of deans and archbishops, each of these memorial tablets normally gives not just a name and a date but some basic information. It can strike us quite quickly that a surprisingly large number of the memorials in the nave concern military personnel.

One of the wall tablets people pause in front of, perhaps because it often has a fresh wreath or flowers before it, is in the south aisle. The striking inscription reads:

> TO THE HONOVRED MEMORY
> OF MAJOR EDWARD MANNOCK
> V C DSO (2 BARS) M C (1 BAR)
> ROYAL AIR FORCE WHO SERVED
> WITH EMINENT DISTINCTION
> IN THE GREAT WAR AND WAS
> KILLED JVLY 26TH 1918 WHILE
> ENGAGED IN AERIAL COMBAT.
> *Sic itur ad astra*

Another epitaph tends to prompt some audible reactions :

IN MEMORY OF CAPTAIN
CHARLES AGNEW
WHO DIED BY THE HAND OF AN ASSASSIN
IN EGYPT 22 MARCH 1873

As does this one:

TO THE MEMORY OF
FREDERICK MACKESON
LIEUTENANT COLONEL IN THE BENGAL ARMY....
DIED AT PESHAWAR SEPTEMBER 14TH 1853
OF A WOUND INFLICTED BY A MAHOMETAN FANATIC

Lieutenant Colonel Mackeson was, it says, born in 1807 and on the sculptured stone urn above the inscription is incised a list of his 'battle honours': Afghanistan 1839, Cabul 1842, Sutlej 1844-46, Punjab 1846-49.

Several other places and dates of battles are listed on a nearby general monument to the 16th Lancers: Talavera, Fuentes d'Onor, Salamanca, Vittoria, Nive, Peninsula, Waterloo, Bhurtpore, Afghanistan, Ghuznee, Maharajpore, Aliwal, Sobraon, Kimberley, Paardeberg.

Some visitors at first take another memorial, to those who 'Fell in action off the Falkland Islands', to be commemorating the Falklands or Malvinas War of 1982 – but the plaque is dated 8th December 1914, and commemorates the crew of *H.M.S. Kent*.

Each of these epitaphs or memorials might prompt reflective thoughts, melancholy musings, sad sentiments. Or perhaps anger or guilt at memories of imperialism. There is a long tradition in English literature of pondering upon epitaphs. As you read, did you perhaps try to imagine the short life of young Edward Mannock, that much-decorated airman in the First World War? Did you speculate on the almost incredible bravery, or foolhardiness, skill or sheer luck, conjured up by that very impressive list of medals? Or did you find yourself wondering about the sacrifice, patriotic or futile, or both, of those young men who died in Afghanistan, long before those who have died there in more recent conflicts. Perhaps you simply registered the resonances today of such words as: Cabul, assassin, fanatic, Falkland Islands. Or thought about the carnage, inflicted and suffered.

If you were actually wandering in the nave itself, you might have noticed, and speculated upon, a possible connection between a plaque in the south aisle recording the now-vanished 15th-century Brenchley Chantry, and a name on a 19th-century war memorial on the wall of the north aisle, honouring a Colonel Bolton, who died at the Battle of Moodkee in 1845, and with him a Captain Willes and two Lieutenants, one named Hart – and the other called Brenchley. The same family name across 400 years?

Reading the epitaph for a Lt. Colonel Sir George Gipps you might have remembered the story I mentioned earlier about the destruction of the gate turrets so that a 19th-century Canterbury banker could see the cathedral clock. Someone called Gipps was then a partner in the bank of Alderman Simmons who asked for those turrets to be removed. That inscription reads:

> LT COLONEL SIR GEORGE GIPPS
> GOVERNOR NEW SOUTH WALES
> DIED 1847 AGED 56.

As well as responding to such possible cross-connections, you might also have found yourself thinking about the apparently arbitrary nature of these many individuals being together in the nave at all, in what seem more or less random juxtapositions, almost the opposite of any orderly 'succession'. As we meander through this space of crowded adjacent memorials, we are not following any kind of ordered chronology of 'history' but almost haphazardly registering different dates, brief records of lives lived decades or even centuries apart. Some who died in the 16th century lie next to those who died a decade ago, and those who were killed in battles far away are alongside others who seem to have spent their entire lives as clergymen within these very walls. These memorialised dead now apparently share a space though they didn't share a life-time.

It is not so much a temporal 'succession' in an otherwise 'empty' history that the dozens of memorials evoke, but rather a strange kind of apparently shared and even jostlingly over-crowded co-existence. Each is recorded as within his or her own individual envelope of time, normally with an inscribed date of birth and one of death, a life-span for each person—yet they are also presented to us as if inhabiting an ongoing and collective abeyance of what we call history, a strangely common or even communal continuing, now, 'outside' history.

Some inscriptions allude to that very suspension, asking us – whenever and whoever we may be who read these words – to 'remember' those who are 'sleeping in the Lord' or 'waiting in hope of the resurrection'. These phrases are specifically Christian formulations, with their various assumptions and implications, though of course the commemorative and communal entombing of the dead is not a practice peculiar to Christianity, nor specific to cathedrals.

When walking through any cemetery, we are perhaps responding to a strange sense of suspended time. One implication of these juxtaposed effigies and epitaphs is that the historical time at which these individuals are recorded as having died has now become almost irrelevant: they have joined a company of the dead. Yet they are also represented as being still present to us. The silent time they seem to share is also rather strangely our own time. We too are alongside them in this suspended time and, looking at

their memorials, we can almost anticipate observing our own, aware of ourselves as also 'entering history'.

This awareness can make the concept of any 'succession' even more puzzling. We might think that each of us 'occupies', or will have occupied, both our own personal time-frame, from birth to death, but also a shared 'historical' overlap with the time-frames of others. Yet do we 'occupy' our own time like a chair or a seat, as our own segment of 'history'? Is there really some shared time-frame, a stratum or domain of 'time', like the waters of an ocean, within or upon which we all 'pass' our lives – the 'homogeneous empty time' remarked upon by Walter Benjamin?

Is the overall succession of times and periods which we think of as 'history' only comprised of, or constructed by, the very concatenation, the overlap, the shifting intersections, of those very specific living times, the 'time of a life', the individual times of many lives? Which have all now vanished. In which case, does 'history' have no more substance or mode of existence than the merely imagined time which these dead are now represented as sharing?

Yet if a history can be composed of and constituted by the co-existence of living individuals, we are also being prompted by this juxtaposition of memorials to think that there is another kind of time, composed of and constituted by the co-existence of those individuals no longer living. What then is our own role or presence among both the living and the dead? Is past history now not 'in time' at all, and not merely 'empty' but actually nothing at all. In that case, what composes or constructs the 'time' of a life anyway?

Even as I stand looking at a monument or taking a photo, has 'my time' of a few moments ago simply evaporated into nothing? As Heraclitus might have said, I cannot take the same photo twice. Not even the same selfie. Can I at least take a photo of the same nave twice: does that not endure, persist?

As we drift through the nave, pausing in front of these disparate memorials, we can almost seem to be evanescent ourselves, perhaps just as present and just as absent as the people remembered around us. If I had taken some video footage of the tourists I watched this morning and now played it back at a speeded-up rate, they would quickly pass in and out of the frame, like ghosts in the view-finder, leaving the space of the nave still visible. Or like those faintly sketched figures in an old print of the nave, faded and perhaps only imaginary, never quite there in the first place.

It may then strike us quite forcibly that many of these memorial tablets in fact only commemorate the dead, but do not actually mark the site of the bodies of those memorialised. Many of these 'tombs' are simply cenotaphs, empty to begin with.

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It may seem that I have too readily accepted the notion that in wandering past these various tombs and monuments I am somehow in the real presence of those who are dead. Which is not something I believe.

However, the uncertainty as to how to behave in the nave partly rests upon a residual and ambivalent reverence directed at this strange absence yet presence of the dead. Normally, if we visit a cemetery it is for the actual interment of someone we knew, and though we accept that they are indeed dead, there is also a continuing sense that on this occasion at least they are somehow present to us. When we pay a visit to a cemetery it is usually because we are specifically visiting the grave of someone we knew, and it is their ambivalent quasi-presence which is the rationale for our being in the cemetery ourselves.

In strolling through the cathedral nave, however, we are not explicitly visiting a relative or a friend, yet in so far as we register ourselves as being inside a cemetery something of that overall ambivalence persists. We can put this into a wider context by further considering the very notion of emptiness. Recall Benjamin's remark about history as 'empty time' and consider another metaphor of his: a 'constellation' of history. A constellation can seem like a diagram of scattered dots on an otherwise empty page.

The ancient notion that after death the souls of the dead went to heaven, or the heavens, meant that in looking upwards we were in some sense looking in the direction of the dead, that the sky both contained and concealed the departed. Today we are unlikely to believe that the dead or the gods are lurking behind the clouds. But when we gaze at the night sky we are conscious that the numerous stars which are visible to the naked eye are only an infinitesimal sample of those which can be made visible by an optical telescope, and that even more stars, galaxies, galaxy clusters, can become apparent through radio astronomy and other means. We have all seen the astonishing photographs. What might initially be regarded, and actually seen, as a predominantly 'empty' sky is almost overflowing with pinpoints of far distant light. Even if we still conceive of the space between the stars as largely 'empty'.

Yet while each star is present in a photograph as a light-trace now, we know that the light from each has travelled to our viewpoint from different vast distances and therefore that those co-present specks of light constitute a composite trace of very different times. Not only as measured from our own location, since each has taken a different number of light-years to reach us, but in terms of the respective times or ages of those stars, galaxies, black holes, and so on, as calculated from any initial singularity. They are temporally layered upon each other even as we look at them 'now'.

Given so many stars, we might well think that 'aliens' are, or were, somehow 'there', that the total space is not empty of other living beings,

that there is a present-absent population we have not encountered. As we once thought that any lands beyond the vast oceans were empty of people, and then found numerous indigenous peoples who had been there all along.

Moreover, we used to think that most of 'matter' was 'empty', that, not unlike the universe itself, the space between the atoms or electrons was a kind of void. Yet in what sense is most of the physical world empty – whether inside atoms, in our own bio-cells, or across the cosmos as the apparent emptiness of dark matter? Do we still think that at both ends of the scale most space is empty? Or as constituted by that form of matter we can only conceive of as 'energy', 'dark' or otherwise?

Compare such astronomical imagings with a notion of 'God' as non-temporal, and characterised somehow by an a-temporal awareness of time. We are now accustomed to think that what is 'now' is only our 'now' among all the relative 'nows' from other view-points within the universe, which is one basic implication of relativity theory. Observing numerous stars in a single cosmic photograph is perhaps like having multiple tabs of various texts from different periods open on the same screen. In other words, a quasi-simultaneous history, while to 'look back' on history is somehow to be aware of ghostly populations.

Meandering past random tombs is different from reading a history narrative. The Bollandists' *Acta Sanctorum* is arranged according to the liturgical calendar, a non-narrative chronology. Browsing it gives a sense of the past as coming to bear upon this 'now', as if all the dead are in the present: the known and recorded perhaps as visible stars, the unknown as blank gaps, and the unknowable or unrecorded as currently invisible, a kind of dark matter. We might think that the corpses of Henry IV and Archbishop Chichele are actually buried under their respective tombs, but what of all the others who have simply passed through the cathedral in one way or another? Briefly visible in our view-finder. And all the other dead? How, today, do we think about them?

We seem to face a rather strange choice. We can try to think in terms of 'succession', with the living and dead somehow 'following' each other, whether individually or as a generation, or perhaps as a period or epoch. This is a linear and apparently obvious 'temporal' way of thinking, as if the lives variously registered in the nave could be lined up, each occupying a certain segment of a general time-line which stretches from the past to the present and from the now into the future. We could even arrange the various dates of birth, or death, of these memorialised dead into a single chronological sequence, as in the tablets listing and commemorating the succession of archbishops, priors, and deans.

On the other hand, the memorials in the cathedral are not arranged in that linear way, and we find ourselves faced with juxtaposed epitaphs and other inscriptions dedicated to people who died with a gap of several decades or centuries between them, but who are now presented as if neighbours in the overall space of the nave. This non-linear mode is often

alluded to in those very epitaphs and memorials, implying some notion of the dead as being *sub specie aeternitatis*, viewed from the perspective of eternity, an 'eternity' envisaged not simply as an endless extension of linear historical time but somehow as an a-temporal mode of being. The existence of 'the dead' is presented as no longer governed by chronological considerations, and we too, in a way faintly analogous to theirs, can seem to drift between times or historical moments, standing in front of a 16th-century medallion, gazing at an 18th-century tomb, pausing at a 17th-century effigy, or a 20th-century plaque, as we wander from one to the other.

If these many distinct lives are to be seen, if not from the perspective of 'eternity' but even from the perspective of our own time, then those epitaphs can be regarded as summing up, however partially or inadequately, each individual life. What those individuals did in their lives is now over, finished, and to some extent known. They occupy, if you like, a fixed or completed history. Indeed, on a certain understanding of the 'perspective of eternity', those individual lives were 'always' known, fixed, complete. Yet the notion of 'always' does not cogently apply to an eternity understood as non-temporal, as not involving a before and after, a past, present, and future, a 'now' or an 'always'.

A persistent assumption in much Western thinking has been that such a non-temporal mode is that of the divine, and indeed that any coherent notion of the divine necessarily involves an a-temporal eternity. This inevitably brings into play the awkward theological issue of 'predestination': that 'God knows' from the perspective of 'eternity' what our lives are to consist of, even 'before' – according to our own temporal standpoint – we have lived them. In which case, any memorial requests for us to pray for the soul of the departed, or which express a 'hope' for their life after death, must seem redundant: such matters are 'already' settled and 'always' were so. Even though 'eternity' has no 'already' or 'always'.

However, if we think in terms of a 'succession' of time, or indeed of times, then the epitaphs and memorials of individuals can often seem very far from complete or finished. Rather, the date of death in many cases can strike us as a merely arbitrary cut-off point. Far from having lived their completed lives, those commemorated soldiers who died in battle, the wives who died in childbirth, the victims of shipwreck or sudden illness, can appear to us as if their lives were never to be fully lived or known, even by themselves. What they might have done without that unexpected or premature termination seems to linger as an always unrealised after-life, beyond the almost accidental date of death which cut short each individual timeline.

Oddly, perhaps, we only rarely find ourselves regarding a date of birth in quite the same manner, as an arbitrary beginning point in a temporal succession. There may be reasons why a particular individual's date of birth might strike us as peculiarly ill- or well-timed. For example, it may indicate

their belonging to an unfortunate generation of infants whom we now know eventually grew up, if at all, only to face the Black Death or the slaughter of the First World War. Conversely, we might notice the tomb of some fourth son of an earl, and realise that the early deaths of all his older siblings, as we can now read in his and their epitaphs, were to grant him a fabulous but wholly unexpected inheritance. Not unlike Henry VIII. But though it seems that many can readily think of death as an almost arbitrarily-timed entry into some other form of life, as being somehow catapulted into a radically different dimension, even perhaps with a continuing form of personal identity, it is far less common, certainly in currently dominant Western habits of thought, to assume that the moment of birth, or perhaps conception, marks some kind of arbitrarily timed parachute jump from a pre-existence into ordinary human time. If history is a succession of births as well as deaths, were we at least 'on time' for our own birth?

One of the most common, and vaguest, notions or images of how we 'enter' and 'leave' a life is not unlike how we think of ourselves as entering and leaving a place, such as the nave itself. We make our entrance at a determinate point 'in time' as if entering a space, and then stroll more or less purposefully, encountering others who came into the same space before us or some little time after we did, until at a relatively indeterminate moment we find ourselves making an 'exit', leaving behind those we have met and perhaps wondering if we will catch up with some who had left before us, in an unknown other space beyond the exit door. Is the particular space we briefly occupied in the large and capacious nave of history now left empty, like a vacant chair, waiting for someone else to occupy it?

sparrow time

There is a passage in the *History of the English Church and People*, written in the eighth century A.D. by the Anglo-Saxon historian Bede. He writes, in Book II, Chapter 13, concerning the conversion of King Edwin of Northumbria, around 627:

> He [the King] summoned a council of the wise men, and asked each in turn his opinion of this strange doctrine [Christianity] and this new way of worshipping the godhead that was being proclaimed to them. ... Coifi, the Chief Priest, replied without hesitation: "Your Majesty, let us give careful consideration to this new teaching, for I frankly admit that, in my experience, the religion that we have hitherto professed seems valueless and powerless. None of your subjects has been more devoted to the service of our gods than myself; yet there are many to whom you show greater favour, who receive greater honours, and who are more successful in all their undertakings. Now, if the gods had any power, they would surely have favoured myself, who has been more zealous in

their service. Therefore, if on examination you perceive that these new teachings are better and more effectual, let us not hesitate to accept them."

Another of the king's chief men signified his agreement with this prudent argument, and went on to say: "Your Majesty, when we compare the present life of man on earth with that time of which we have no knowledge, it seems to me like the swift flight of a single sparrow through the banqueting hall where you are sitting at dinner on a winter's day with your thanes and counsellors. In the midst there is a comforting fire to warm the hall; outside, the storms of winter rain or snow are raging. This sparrow flies swiftly in through one door of the hall, and out through another. While he is inside, he is safe from the winter storms; but after a few moments of comfort, he vanishes from sight into the wintry world from which he came. Even so, man appears on earth for a little while; but of what went before this life or of what follows, we know nothing. Therefore, if this new teaching has brought any more certain knowledge, it seems only right that we should follow it."

The sparrow which flies through a window into the warm and crowded feasting hall of a king, only to fly rapidly through the brightly lit space and out again into the cold dark night, is obviously a parable of the brief 'passing through' of a life. It is also an image of time as space.

nave time

We might ask: what of the nave itself, this space which we briefly occupy as visitors? Is that also 'passing through' the space it occupies? In one sense, there has been a nave in this location since the seventh century. When archaeological excavations in the nave were most recently conducted, in 1993, they revealed some remains of an apse under the floor of the present nave, probably from the eleventh century. So 'this space', which we might think of as a constant set of marked coordinates on a geographical map, has been 'occupied' 'successively' by generations who have worshipped within its confines, but inside various different buildings: the physical shape and the material of what has constituted 'the nave' has changed considerably several times over.

From a combination of archaeological and written evidence we can say that there was once, it seems, a basic wooden construction, which was followed by a partly stone building, which was itself destroyed in a Viking raid, and its replacement was again later devastated by a fire in 1067. The first Norman Archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc, supervised the building of a much enlarged nave, but even that is not what we enter today. The present soaring columns and wonderful roof we owe mainly to a rebuilding of the nave's piers and walls during the priorate of Thomas Chillenden

(1391–1411). By the 18th century the old Norman floor and the 15th century aisle walls were perhaps even more cluttered with memorial furniture of various sorts than they are today. Only when the Norman stone floor was replaced in 1786 was much of that removed, and many of the present military memorials date from after that clearing out. For long stretches since the 17th century the nave was barely in use at all, often left dark, deserted and cold, while religious activities were usually conducted in what had been the monastic Chapter House, then renamed the Sermon House, since listening to sermons was at times far more popular than attending the Communion Service or Evensong.

In what sense does the present nave, or its predecessors, 'occupy' the same space as those which no longer exist? Each 'successive' nave may have been built upon the 'same' ground. But, almost by definition, they did not construct the 'same space' above ground and were certainly not built 'in the same time'. The various 'successive' naves no longer exist, have gone, in some sense, into history, into a kind of architectural nothing-ness, even if archaeological evidence remains.

We might say that each 'nave' had, or existed as, or constructed, its own space, and in somewhat the same way that each nave has had, or perhaps has been, its own time: each nave existed as its own process of ageing, decay, and deterioration. Its own 'history' can be situated in terms of changing relations with the different temporalities (including the intermittent re-building) of other parts of the cathedral: the repeated re-constructions and considerable re-modellings of the choir and of the sanctuary, the partial replacement of the cloisters, the endless cycle of overall maintenance and local repair which goes on year after year. The cathedral today is very rarely free of scaffolding. This ship is being constantly reconstructed even as it sails, an ongoing physical process, of material decay and human labour, of wood and stone, materials with a 'life-time' of their own, a matter of physics and chemistry, of wear and weather.

These considerations also apply to the various material tombs and epitaphs which currently take up particular local spaces within the nave. Each of the tombs or cenotaphs has its own relatively limited time-span and we know, particularly in relation to the floor of the nave, that many dozens of memorial plaques which were recorded in the late 18th century are no longer in the nave, so the space on the present floor is now available for other memorials.

But what do we say now of the occupants of the tombs, or those commemorated? That they too simply occupied a certain space in history and, like those previous naves, have now disappeared into a nothingness, apart perhaps from a few archaeological fragments. Should we therefore say much the same of ourselves, as we too take our temporary places in the nave?

Yet here we probably pause. There is, it seems, a deep reluctance to regard the time of a living individual and especially our own time, in the

same way as we might regard the time of a building. That reluctance is, we can recognise, the main reason why the nave is so full of memorials, and why this church is also a cemetery. At the core of the cathedral is, or was, a persistent belief that the dead have not simply gone into 'history' but that, in some way, they persist in an after-time.

But what of historical 'events' themselves? Clearly, an event does not survive in the way that a building does, even if one might claim that the after-effects or consequences of a particular event somehow persist. But can we simply say that an event has become a nothing, that it no longer exists? In which case, how do we think of the existence of history at all?

remains

We can uncover the still existing remains of eleventh-century pier bases under the present floor of the nave. Indeed, to be sure of constructing a reliable account of the construction history of the nave we have needed the actual uncovering of those pier bases and various other archaeological remains and residues. Otherwise we might not be confident of any existing written descriptions of the history of the nave, any more than in Somner's mistaken date for the Christ Church Gate.

It is probable that the remains of the eighth century historian Bede himself are now under the floor of the Galilee Chapel in Durham Cathedral. We think we know that his body was brought from Jarrow, where he died around 731, to Durham Cathedral in 1020, where it was placed in the same tomb as the remains of Saint Cuthbert of Lindisfarne. In 1370 Bede's remains were moved to a shrine in the Galilee Chapel and though that shrine was destroyed during the Reformation, Bede's bones were reburied in the chapel. In 1831 the bones were again exhumed and placed in a new tomb. But whereas we can largely reconstruct an earlier nave from the archaeological remains, it is not primarily from Bede's bones that we might attempt to reconstruct his own life-time.

Earlier, I quoted a passage from Bede's *History*. No eighth-century manuscript of that *History* survives. We have a succession of manuscript copies, or more exactly several sequences of transmission of copies, with some variations and divergences from each other. But the texts which have been so transmitted are sufficiently similar to allow printed critical editions, and translations, which we can be reasonably confident convey the sense of the words Bede wrote in about 730 A.D. It is not necessary for his autograph manuscript to have survived. Or his bones.

What has been retained in the centuries since his words were written are, we tend to say, Bede's own thoughts. The temptation is to believe that those 'thoughts' had or have a peculiarly different status even from the written words themselves and that, more generally, the person who thought them can somehow survive his own time in a way quite different from the

persistence of stones, tombs, naves, or even manuscripts. In reading Bede's text we are somehow, we can almost believe, in the company of Bede himself.

As we stroll the nave we are constantly prompted to believe by the memorial inscriptions addressed to us that, somehow, those commemorated still exist, that we are, however strangely, in the company of the persisting dead. From a certain viewpoint, the nave with its numerous monuments presents itself as a strange kind of history book, not in the familiar form of a linear narrative telling a consecutive story, but rather like those 18th-century volumes of collected antiquarian texts, compilations of surviving documents, almost fortuitous miscellanies.

Anyone who guides a visitor around the cathedral probably tries to offer a linear narrative or overview, perhaps an architectural history or an outline of successive significant dates, but any such effort tends to be constantly interrupted or deflected by the temptation to comment upon some particular detail: a mediaeval mason's mark on a wall, or an interesting decoration, a step worn away by pilgrim feet, or a magnificent window. If we are 'entering into history' when we enter the cathedral, it is not the neat linear succession of a list of dates but more like the multiple filiations and links of a hyper-text – in which a dead soldier's military service in Cabul in 1850 can suddenly resonate with yesterday's campaigns in Afghanistan, the name of a 15th-century Lord Chief Justice finds an echo in the 19th century, and our own visit can momentarily seem to echo or repeat an experience of awe recorded by past poets and pilgrims.

Some further comments by Walter Benjamin come to mind:

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it "the way it really was" (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.
>
> For every image of the past that is not recognized by the present as one of its own concerns threatens to disappear irretrievably.
>
> History is the subject of a structure whose site is not homogeneous, empty time, but time filled by the presence of the now.

If we probe our reactions to these tombs and this layering of histories, our motivations and responses, our understanding of both history and time, we may increasingly be aware that, perhaps unlike visitors from some earlier periods, we are now strangely uncertain of what we think about these matters. Whereas previous generations seem to have proclaimed a degree of confidence concerning life and an after-life, or the persistence of time and history, we may find ourselves unsure even as to the very nature of time itself. If, for example, we take seriously the notion of space-time, then if far distant space exists now, what of far distant time? There is a version of

Einstein's theory which asserts that time is not to be distinguished from space and that space-time is itself non-temporal. All is now, it can seem.

Perhaps our encounter with the Cathedral may help to clarify how that possible change in understanding has occurred. Later, for example, we will consider an Archbishop of Canterbury who debated whether time itself may or may not have had a beginning. But first, allow me to take what may seem a detour, as I meander around for a little longer.

more about monuments

By focussing on these memorials I have been echoing many older books on cathedrals. Earlier writers often recorded the numerous inscriptions for the dead. The Canterbury mediaeval historians or chroniclers Eadmer and Gervase, as we will see later, were concerned to pinpoint the exact location of the various burials of saints in the cathedral. William Somner, the 17th-century Canterbury historian, transcribed many epitaphs from the cathedral in his *Antiquities of Canterbury* published in 1640. In the 18th century Somner's work was variously added to and amended by Nicholas Battely, John Dart, Edward Hasted, and several others. Before Somner, the great antiquarian and historian William Camden had recorded the details of the tombs in Westminster Abbey, in his *Reges, reginae, nobiles et alii in ecclesia collegiata B. Petri Westmonasterii sepulti*, published in 1600.

The most ambitious post-Reformation attempt to record memorial monuments was John Weever's unfinished *Antient Funerall Monuments,* published in 1631. Weever set out to make a record of every important tomb in every major church in England. He had only completed a fairly small part of this enormous project when, it is said, he accidentally fell onto a tomb while transcribing it, struck his head on its corner, and died – which seems somehow appropriate. In the case of Canterbury cathedral, Weever did manage to complete his task as intended, since he set out primarily to record the tombs and memorials of aristocracy and archbishops. His lists were arranged not so much chronologically as hierarchically. Weever writes, rather apologetically, in his *Epistle to the Reader*:

> I include the epitaphs and funeral inscriptions in this book as I find them engraven, with a *cuius anime proprietur deus* or with *God pardon his soul*; which some may say might have been as well left out of my book, as they are in many places scraped out of the brass: and I write the Latin in the same manner as I find it either written or imprinted, as *capud* for *caput*, *nichill* for *nihil*, and the like; as also *e* vocal, for *æ*, diphthong, diphthongs being but lately come into use. … I hope that neither the conclusion of the one, nor termination of the other will seem any way offensive to my intelligent reader.

It may seem almost amusing that Weever regarded the once-traditional requests for prayers for the soul of the deceased as on a par with the 'incorrect' spelling of mediaeval Latin. However, there were profoundly serious issues involved. Some tendencies in the Reformation favoured a prohibition on the earlier practice of praying for, and certainly any praying to, the dead. There is no way of knowing how many memorials had 'offensive' inscriptions 'scraped out of the brass', defaced, or otherwise destroyed by 1631. In numerous cases all we now have are the transcribed and printed records, not the carved or engraved inscriptions themselves.

By contrast with this hostile Reformed position, Weever records a Papal letter to the clergy of England indicating how the devout should respond to Thomas Becket's status as a saint and martyr:

> We admonish you all, and by the authority which we retain, do strictly charge you, that you celebrate the day of the suffering of the blessed man Thomas, the glorious martyr, sometime Archbishop of Canterbury, every year in most solemn sort; and that with devout prayers you endeavour your selves to purchase forgiveness of sins: that he which for Christ sake suffered punishment in this life, and martyrdom in death by constancy of virtue, through continual supplication of faithful people, may make intercession for you to God.

Many of Weever's contemporaries would have found utterly 'offensive' both the idea of endeavouring to 'purchase' forgiveness with devout prayers and any notion of the dead Becket being asked to make intercessions to God. Even the traditional phrase *requiescat in pace* – 'may he rest in peace' – which can be interpreted as an abbreviated prayer, was sometimes subject to erasure as 'offensive'.

More extensive acts than simply erasing memorial inscriptions did of course occur, the most notorious being the total demolition of Becket's own shrine. As briefly mentioned earlier, a plaque on the south aisle wall records the Brenchley Chantry about which the voluminous eighteenth-century historian of Kent Edward Hasted writes:

> There was another small chapel or Chantry of the lady Joane Brencheley, . . in it was an altar dedicated to Saint John the Baptist. Sir William Brenchley, chief justice of the Kings Bench, was buried near it, in the nave, in 1446, and his widow built this chapel next year, and erected an altar in it, with consent of the prior and convent. After the dissolution of the Priory it fell to decay and lay in ruins, till Deane Neville, at the beginning of Queen Elizabeth's reign, repaired it for a burying place for himself and family; hence it acquired the name of Deane Neville's Chapel, by which it continued to be called, till the whole of it, with the monuments in it, was a few years since pulled

down, and the materials removed, as having an unsightly appearance to the rest of the church.

Hasted elsewhere remarks:

> few men ever possessed a more liberal heart than Deane Neville. By his munificence to Trinity College, he secured to himself the gratitude and admiration of posterity. He expended more than £3000 in rebuilding that fine quadrangle, which, to this day, retains the name of Neville's Court. He was also a contributor to the library of that college . . He died unmarried, and was buried . . in the small chapel on the south side of the nave of this Cathedral, which he had fitted up for a burial place for himself and his relations

One might describe this personal appropriation of the chapel somewhat differently: as an instance in miniature of the treatment of the monastery itself and the privatisation of its assets. The same might be said of Dean Neville's donation of rare mediaeval manuscripts from the despoliation of the Christ Church monastic library to his Cambridge *alma mater*.

Brenchley's Chantry has disappeared, but we can still see the remains of a Royal Chantry, perhaps because nobody had the temerity to tamper with a King's endowment. Weever quotes from the last will and testament of King Henry IV, who died in 1413: 'I ordain and devise that there be a chantry perpetual of two priests for to sing and pray for my soul in the aforesaid church of Canterbury, in such place and after such Ordinance as it seems best to my aforesaid cousin [the Archbishop] of Canterbury'.

The practice of two priests perpetually praying and singing in the royal chantry was discontinued at the Reformation, but the actual chapel was not destroyed. Puzzled tourists can still peer through the windows of this tiny room in the north ambulatory with a small altar squashed against a wall and wonder what on earth it was for.

King Henry IV's tomb is directly facing the chantry, on the north flank of the site of Becket's shrine, and corresponding to it on the south side is that of the Black Prince. Along the bevelled edging of the latter tomb we can still find inscribed not only the traditional prayer formula 'To the soul of whom God grant mercy, Amen', but also a set of verses which include many of the assumptions about praying for the dead which some later found so 'offensive' and unacceptable. These verses were perhaps not 'scraped out of the brass' only because they are in Norman French, even more unintelligible to ordinary folk than Latin. They were 'Englished' by Weever as:

> Whoso thou be that passes by
> Where these corps entombed lie
> Understand what I shall say

As at this time speak I may.
Such as thou art, some time was I,
Such as I am, such shalt thou be.
I little thought on the hour of death
So long as I enjoyed breath . . .
For Gods sake pray to the heavenly King,
That he my soul to heaven would bring.
All they that pray and make accord
For me unto my God and Lord
God place them in his paradise
Wherein no wretched caitiff lives.

That the Black Prince should thus 'speak' directly from his grave to those who pass by, requesting that they (still) pray to bring his soul to heaven, encapsulates the notion that we, standing before his tomb, somehow co-exist with the continuing dead. It is the text, the inscription, which claims and enacts this apparent co-presence.

Though Royalty was thus partly exempted from post-Reformation prohibitions on praying for the dead, what mostly replaced the mediaeval requests for prayer on their behalf was simply an injunction to 'remember' the dead individual. In the canon of the mediaeval Mass it is God who is implored to 'remember' the dead, to call them to mind, while the congregation are asked to 'pray for' the dead. Insofar as it is the passing observer of a tomb who is now requested to 'remember', it is unclear why calling a dead person to one's own mind should be to anybody's benefit, except simply as a gesture of respect or gratitude, the residual sense in which an 11th of November is called Remembrance Sunday.

By the 19th century, it was for their military honours in particular that deceased men were commemorated and which apparently justified the privilege of their being given a monument in the cathedral. Taking part in a battle had become almost the paradigm for a memorable life. Rather than a holy Christian life leading to a heavenly after-life, it was through imperial warfare that one entered into the recorded history of a grateful nation. For women, however, their 'achievement' which merited a memorial in the cathedral was contributing, it seems, as dutiful wives and productive mothers, to the commendable continuation of some prominent male family lineage.

Weever's own account of another royal personage, buried in Saint Michael's Chapel, is representative of this emphasis:

> Thomas Duke of Clarence, second son of King Henry IV, Lord High Steward of England, Constable of the Kings host, and Lieutenant-General of his army in France, who (after his many fortunate events in war) was the first man that was slain in the battle of Baugy upon Easter eve, Anno Domino 1420, by one John Swinton, a Scot, who wounded

> him in the face with his lance, as he was remounting (having given singular demonstration of his great valour) and so threw him to the ground. And with him that day were slain many of exemplary note, besides 4,500 common soldiers.

We might note the concluding laconic phrase: 'besides 4,500 common soldiers'.

'victories'

Dying in battle was clearly a mode of intersection between an individual's life-time and the history of the nation, even if some individuals were more commended and commemorated than others for doing so. But if, after the Reformation, we were not being asked to 'pray for the souls' of these dead, what exactly are we being asked to 'remember', and why?

In the case of a soldier we are presumably being encouraged to recall their individual sacrifice for the cause of the nation. Yet if we try to find out more fully what is memorable about them, the results may be a little troublesome.

Let us return, for example, to the case of Major Edward Mannock, VC, DSO (2 bars), MC (1 bar). Few would dispute that this is an impressive military record, and indeed Major 'Mick' Mannock is regarded by some as the single most successful fighter pilot on the British side in World War I, with numerous confirmed 'victories' or 'kills'. Yet some (disputed) reminiscences of him indicate that he was an inveterate hater of Germans, with a passionately brutal attitude to his German counterparts, and that he had some almost pathological characteristics. If we envisage Major Mannock confronting (whether supported by fervent prayers or not) a celestial tribunal, it is perhaps not guaranteed that an impartial or divine judgement would automatically concur in the assumption that Mannock VC was justified in killing over sixty individuals because he was fighting on the English side. A later assessment, let alone a final one, might well call to mind quite other factors, including in many of the 19th-century instances recorded in the cathedral, the justification for waging a particular war in the first place. The 'Mahometan Fanatic' or Egyptian 'Assassin' might well have suggested a different viewpoint.

Moreover, it is not always the case that those commemorated are universally regarded as having made a memorable contribution to the life of the nation. Archbishop Thomas Bourchier, for instance, has an impressive memorial in the north choir aisle. Yet Weever provides the following sardonic account of his life and career (my italicised emphasis):

> He was brought up in Oxford, and first preferred to the deanery of Saint Martins, then to the bishopric of Worcester. From whence he was translated to Ely; and lastly, enthronised in this chair of Canterbury,

> wherein he sat 32 years, and lived after the time of his first consecration 51 years. I find not that ever any Englishman continued so long a Bishop, or that any Archbishop, either before or after him, in 800 years enjoyed that place so long. And to add more honour to his grace, and money to his purse, he was about two years Lord Chancellor of England, and Cardinal … *Yet for all this time, for all these great and eminent promotions, he left nothing behind him to continue his memory, but an old rotten chest in the congregation house at Cambridge*, called Billingsworth and Bowser, into which (for the use of the University) Billingsworth before him had put in £100, and he, forsooth, imitating that munificent example, put in £120. He died March 30 1486.

This might not be wholly fair to the Archbishop, if only because in the course of a long political career he managed to crown no less than three English Kings who had fought against each other during the Wars of the Roses.

A clearer example of un-memorability might be the person whose name is supposed to endow his memorial tablet, in the south nave aisle, with everlasting significance:

> He that's imprison'd in this narrow room,
> Wer't not for custom, needs nor verse nor tomb;
> Nor can from these a memory be lent
> To him who must be his tomb's monument.
> And by the virtue of his lasting fame,
> Must make his tomb live long, not it his name;
> For when this gaudy Monument is gone,
> Children of the unborn world shall spy the stone
> That covers him, and to their fellows cry,
> Tis here, 'tis hereabout, Berkeley does lie.
> To build his tomb then is not thought so safe,
> Whose virtue must outlive his epitaph.

Sadly, we don't otherwise know who Berkeley was. At least this unknown's plaque has not been erased as offensive, even if nobody now is likely to pray for him.

*

The issue of the appropriateness of prayer or even of commemoration directly arises with some of the memorial effigies, in which the dead themselves are represented as praying. Situated in one of the more prominent locations, right next to King Henry IV and overlooking where Becket's shrine used to be, is a notable monument to Dean Wotton, a somewhat flexible clergyman who served, and survived, four successive monarchs, including the Catholic Queen Mary. His career blatantly

highlights an issue raised by the Reformation notion that a national monarch might be the supreme head of a church and thereby responsible for deciding its doctrinal beliefs.

For an individual who kept his place under successive monarchs of very different religious persuasions, Wotton's monument provides a neat solution to the problem of reconciling Royal edicts which oscillated between prohibition of and approval for the practice of praying for the dead. He is represented as devoutly kneeling with a Bible or prayer-book (it is not clear which) in front of him, his hands joined, it seems, in prayer. But is Wotton's finely sculptured gesture merely a cautious representation of the kind of prayerful worship of God which Wotton is hopefully envisaged as still continuing in some form in heaven? Or is it, unavoidably, a gesture evoking the notion that he is at least praying for himself?

Are we also to take it that it is not actually prayer for the dead which is depicted on the wonderful Hales Memorial, where two wives are represented as kneeling with hands clasped in a praying attitude? What of the several recumbent figures elsewhere in the nave who are sculpted as rather awkwardly lying on their back or side with hands joined together in a gesture of prayer? Are they not to be thought of as praying on their own behalf?

Henry Chichele

A clear pre-Reformation example, from a particularly privileged position near Becket's shrine, and almost opposite the Black Prince's tomb, is that of Archbishop Henry Chichele, who is presented as recumbent with firmly clasped hands, undoubtedly in prayer. However, those who 'remember' this Arch-bishop might recall that in 1420 he presided as judge over proceedings in the case against William Taylor, a priest who had already been excommunicated for heresy, and was finally burned alive for saying that prayers ought *not* to be addressed to saints, but only to God.

Chichele's elaborate monument is now the most impressively decorated tomb in the cathedral. He fought fiercely against the Lollards, with their allegedly heretical theological opinions and their presumed political tendencies. Since the Lollards were opposed to the religious use of images, Chichele was ostentatiously continuing a posthumous campaign when he had his tomb, with its many sculpted figures and other images, designed and even erected before his death. Smith describes it:

> On a table, which is supported by three arches, lies his effigy in full pontificals . . Angels support the head, and at the feet are two kneeling monks, with flowing hair, holding open books. Beneath, in striking contrast to the effigy above, is the representation of an emaciated figure almost naked. Above the tomb is a canopy, under which, at the head and foot of the tomb, are a number of niches filled with small figures.

> The whole of the monument is elaborately carved**,** gilded, and coloured.

The emaciated and almost naked recumbent figure visible on a separate level beneath the splendidly robed effigy is known as a *gisant*: its message is that underneath all the finery and pomp is a merely human body, now a corpse, the same as the rest of us will be, thereby juxtaposing the great and the ordinary, the noble and the dead, the glory and the dust. In death nobody is special, however spectacular their tomb. An inscription reads (in Latin): "I was born a pauper, then to primate raised. Now I am cut down and served up for worms. Behold my grave." Again, the deceased voice speaks personally from beyond.

The *gisant* is not a realistic representation of the actual corpse which now lies buried, invisible, and rotted away, supposedly beneath the tomb. So the overall structure implies a total of four 'bodies' of Archbishop Henry Chichele: that of the decomposed corpse; the *gisant* figure; the magnificent effigy; and the hoped-for heavenly body. What is prominently represented are two states: the regalia and robes of an Archbishop indicate his office, a function or role to which we can assign definite dates (1414-1443) as a phase within the overall lifetime of this individual (born c. 1364, died 1443); and the *gisant*, as a visible reminder of an unavoidable corporeal fate and of the grimly restricted temporal span for any continued existence of the actual decaying corpse. But what are we to say of the fourth version, as it were, of Chichele: his current post-mortem existence? Where and when is that? Indeed, what image of that mode of being might be put alongside those representations of the archiepiscopal office-holder and of the bare forked animal beneath?

Arranged on the several decorative levels of the surrounding stonework are numerous sculpted figures. Some are identifiable historical individuals, King Henry IV, King Henry V, Queen Margaret of Anjou, and a few of Chichele's predecessors as Archbishop, Elphege, Augustine, and Dunstan. Other figures intermingled with them are the Virgin Mary with the Christ Child, the Archangel Gabriel, and the Archangel Michael. Positioned at the main effigy's head and feet are several small angels, while a number of allegorical figures such as the Four Virtues were once also present. And there is also Abraham, who is clasping to his bosom yet another, but miniature, figure of Chichele himself. All these are represented in more or less the same mode: as small human-like figurines.

Is the implication that in his current mode of after-life existence, or in heaven itself, Chichele is, or will be, somehow in the same ontological category as angels and even allegories? Or is it simply that when the sculptor, or indeed anyone, tries to imagine and depict a post-death existence it can only look remarkably like a familiar terrestrial form of living?

Yet what is the relationship envisaged between the decaying corpse and Chichele's post-mortem existence, heavenly or otherwise? The suggestion that even an Archbishop had gone straight to heaven at his death would have been an unlikely assumption for his 15th-century contemporaries. Unless perhaps he was a martyr. Though in the opinion of the Lollards Archbishop Chichele could indeed have gone straight to hell. In any case, where did anyone think he was—or is?

after-life-time

It is time to probe directly some of the theological puzzles, especially about the nature of time, which are involved in the practice of praying for the dead. There are more general questions, in so far as any form of prayer is envisaged as engaging with the eternal will of God, itself an instance of the puzzling intersection of the timeless with time: how an a-temporal God can intervene in a temporal process. This conundrum applies as much to the situation of praying for mercy for oneself before death as to the action of praying for someone else after their death. In what sense could God be asked to change his eternal mind? Even more puzzling, if someone prays *to* the dead, asking for the intercession of the dead on behalf of the living, a very curious set of temporal tangles would seem to be in play. The living supplicant is in effect asking for a change in the behaviour or attitude of the already dead in order to influence the eternal divine into modifying the present condition of the still living.

For many people, however, it is not a quasi-philosophical puzzle about time, or even any explicitly intellectual concern, that shapes their attitude to prayer or their conception of an after-life. There is often a highly personal and emotional investment in what is regarded as primarily a moral problem, a matter of divine fairness. So let us first approach some problems about the nature of time through a consideration of issues of justice.

One important component of a belief in an afterlife can be a deeply felt demand that wrongs or injustices which are clearly not put right on this side of death should and will be rectified beyond the grave, somehow, by someone, some time. The wrongs in question might, for example, be perceived as an unjust disparity between the situation of the rich and the poor, as articulated in the parable of Dives and Lazarus. Or the driving notion might be that the perpetrators of specific brutal acts of inhumanity who suffer no retribution in this life will somehow be punished in a posthumous life. Or even, as in the case of the priest's complaint given in the quotation from Bede, one might feel that a lifetime's devotion to the divine has not yet been adequately rewarded.

The notion that justice will have to be done after death implies that those deserving of just treatment will still be, in some sense, 'alive' to undergo it, that the culprits will have persisted in existence and be available for

appropriate retribution to be applied. The corresponding belief or hope is that the victims of injustice too will have some posthumous redress, that the un-just suffering they have endured in life will be compensated by a state of felicity in the afterlife, which implies that they too will still be 'there' to enjoy it.

Conceptions of heaven and hell are thus often closely tied to a belief that justice is in some sense a transcendental value which must necessarily be realised, whatever the failings, indifference, or complicity of the agents of inadequate earthly justice. There is then the issue of how such posthumous justice is to be implemented: who will judge and on what basis; what criteria are to be applied, and what form can any retribution or recompense take.

Moreover, if deliberate acts of injustice are to be punished, what of failures to combat injustice: sins of omission as well as of commission? And if not only actual acts of injustice are to be judged but also unimplemented intentions of injustice, are we also to be liable for our unstated or apparently unknown unjust desires, even unconscious ones? In which case, only an omniscient judge or an all-seeing Recording Angel could satisfy the endemically paranoid elaboration of a belief that all sins, including our own hidden ones, must be punished. Any notion of a Recording Angel then raises the perhaps quaint or abstruse issue of whether such an angel is indeed recording our misdeeds 'in real time', even as we commit them, or is only poised to inscribe them retrospectively in an angelic ledger at a later moment of summing up, a final accounting. That is, assuming the peculiar existence, and time, of angels anyway. It's perhaps simpler if God does all his own accounting?

The underlying logic, and the initial premise that justice will somehow be implemented, if not in this life then posthumously, thus leads to the familiar notion of a two-fold condition: those who are guilty will be punished, in some version of a hell, while those mercifully judged as not so guilty will be blessed, and enter some form of heaven. But insofar as these conditions are posthumous, what is the nature of the 'time' in which they are assumed to occur?

One response is that the condition of hell or of heaven is to be an eternal one, meaning either that it will be endless or that it will be in some sense non-temporal. But then a further issue of justice arises. According to what criteria would it be just to condemn a person, whatever the extent of their own acts of injustice, to an endless punishment, to suffering without end? Or indeed what could possibly justify the reward of an infinite and eternal bliss? Are such fates justly proportionate to an individual's guilt or merit? And when, at what stage or moment in the lifetime of the person involved, could such an overall judgement be justly made? Are our unjust and just actions to be somehow assessed across the whole range of our life-time, or is the condition in which we end our lives to be taken primarily into consideration? And can we, on this side of our death, put right our own wrongs, or at least compensate by good actions for the unjust actions of

which we have been guilty? Can prayer and penance in some way contribute, and if so, how is this compensatory behaviour to be taken into account? And when? At our death? But what about a premature or sudden and unexpected death? Think of those soldiers abruptly killed in battle and mothers dying in childbirth.

We could very easily add to these ramifying questions the many further considerations which mediaeval pastoral manuals and systematic moral theology text-books were constrained to examine. It was quite often maintained during the mediaeval period that a last-minute repentance, a death-bed conversion, or a death-bed baptism (as in the alleged case of the Emperor Constantine), could indeed qualify one for entry into heaven, whatever one's previous faults. Christ's own promise to the crucified thief that he would be in Paradise that very day was often taken as a validation of this view. However, it could then seem a matter of questionable justice if, for example, a sinner who had embarked in all good faith upon a process of repentance and penance but who was unable to fulfil or complete that process because of a sudden and unexpected death, were to be regarded as having gained no compensatory merit for his or her attempt. Especially if the timing of the sinner's death was always in the purview of God himself.

A questioning of the application of divine justice could also arise if, for example, a sinner had been assigned a stipulated act of penance by a confessor and had conscientiously fulfilled it, but through the incompetence or ignorance of the confessor the specific penance demanded had been in some way inappropriate or inadequate: would the divine justice hold it against the penitent that he or she had only performed ten days of penance whereas the appropriate imposition should have been twenty?

Clearly, this last example involves a starkly and even absurdly mechanistic model of how repentance and one's posthumous fate might be assessed or calibrated. But such issues arose as a logical implication of the basic premises. This was precisely the kind of question which could confront a conscientious spiritual adviser faced with a neurotically concerned parishioner or the grieving mother of a recently deceased sinner. It is worth asking yourself what reply you might have given to such a distraught mother's anxious queries. The development of systematic penitential handbooks in the Western Church is sufficient evidence that such casuistical questions were real for those asking them. Nor did they evaporate if you tried to counsel yourself as your own spiritual adviser.

However, even if it was allowed that actions (including prayers) prior to death could somehow modify one's assignment to eternal hell or to infinite heaven, several other questions inevitably arose. If an individual before they died could undertake penance to mitigate the punishment due to their unjust actions, could one person undertake penance on behalf of, and as a substitute for, some other person? Would or could this act of altruistic penance or sacrifice, as on the very model of Christ's own vicarious action, be taken into account in an eventual judgement? Could not a devout

mother somehow transfer some of her own 'merit' to aid her dead but wayward son? Surely at least by praying for him?

Indeed, what difference could it logically make to eternal divine justice if such redemptive acts were performed either before or after the death of the person for whose benefit they were intended? How could 'before' or 'after' impinge upon God in the first place? If acts of acceptable penance included, for example, the giving of alms as penitential donations to the poor, or to the church itself, then what of a case in which a person had died but had deliberately left specific posthumous instructions to provide for such almsgiving? Or if a devout friend offered such alms on their behalf, even after their death?

One partial solution to some of these proliferating dilemmas was that the absolute dichotomy between bliss in heaven or eternity in hell must, in accordance with the requirements of justice itself, be able somehow to be modified or supplemented by a third possibility: that in some way, even after death, the penitential efforts of oneself during a lifetime, or perhaps even the vicarious actions of others after one's death, could somehow serve to enable a sinner to 'enter heaven', even if he or she had not adequately qualified at the point of death for doing so.

All such considerations necessarily implied some form of continuing personal existence and some deeply problematic notions concerning time and eternity. As we will see, these issues both underpinned the very existence of the cathedral and monastery and also partly motivated the movement which threatened them.

A quite different 'solution' to all such quibbles and conundra, and an impatiently dismissive response to these casuistical queries and hypothetical situations, was simply to decide to proclaim that divine justice and mercy would inscrutably arrive at a proper settlement, whatever our own actions or intentions, vicarious or otherwise. On this view, the presumably final divine decision, whether at death or otherwise, was not amenable to qualification by the actions of either the departed or anyone else on their behalf. That, in effect, nothing done by the living could modify the condition of the dead, that no good works or prayers would alter the divine judgement. The implications of such a position were that divine justice makes an 'eternal' decision as to the posthumous fate of the departed, based upon criteria which might even be ultimately unknowable to the believer and therefore not only impossibly and perhaps unjustly un-observable but essentially irrelevant to any action taken by an individual concerning their own fate. The acute paranoid anxiety of John Bunyan in his autobiographical *Grace Abounding to the Chief of Sinners* is a memorable working-through of this personal dilemma, despite any proffered qualifications and clarifications consolingly offered by some Reformed theologians.

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Involved in such increasingly refined (but pastorally and theologically unavoidable, if unanswerable) puzzles, inquiries, and contending positions was the problem of the nature of the 'time' during which any such posthumous processes might be thought of as occurring. Even the notion that Hell was a place of punishment, especially of torture, perhaps exquisitely and horrifically imagined in all its painful details, surely involved at least some notion of a temporal process. An act of torture necessarily, it would seem, takes time to perform and to have an effect, especially if such acts are to be endlessly repeated. And though it might be possible somehow to conceptualise a state of a-temporal bliss, the various popular attempts to imagine the condition of being 'in heaven' tended also to bring into play some further odd questions about time. For example, whether the imagined heavenly choirs were able to sing a-temporally, since choral singing in particular would seem to involve, at the very least, appropriately keeping to a complex set of shared tempos, even if the paradisical compositions being performed had no beginning, middle, or end – an intriguing challenge for any celestial musician or angelic composer.

Faced with these various conundra, the simplest 'common sense' solution was to envisage hellish or heavenly time as basically modified versions of familiar earthly time, but somehow extended to infinity. Moreover, if the notion of a third and intermediate posthumous condition, that which came to be known as 'purgatory', was accepted as possible, then clearly any process of gradual purgation itself involved some version of ongoing time. Purgatory was intrinsically a 'temporary' state. It took 'time' for a penitent inhabitant of this third state to be 'purged', to advance from an initial position of inadequate qualification for 'entering' heaven to an improved condition in which they were eventually poised at the heavenly gates. But what were the appropriate units of a purgatorial time? And how long, O Lord, would it take?

In practice, the quasi-solution to the problem of purgatorial 'time' was to operate with some form of calculable equivalence between the days of penance which might be imposed upon a sinner on this earth and the notional 'days' of attrition to be undergone in purgatory. This implied, for example, that if an act of almsgiving, in the form of a specific monetary donation, could be equated with and substituted for a determinate number of actual days of earthly penance (as a legal fine might be imposed or accepted in lieu of several days of hard labour or a fixed period of imprisonment), then surely the purgatorial equivalent would also have a kind of estimated financial rate.

Eventually, the logic and temptation of this position led to the sale of 'indulgences', as ecclesiastically authorised pardons for a specified number of 'days' in purgatory, at a price calculation of so much 'per day'. A specific period or act of penance could correspondingly be equated with a

calculation of alms, not unlike an established wage-rate for days of terrestrial work-time. And that sum could in turn be translated into the price of an indulgence certificate calculated or specified in purgatorial days. Yet this popular, and lucrative, practice merely side-stepped a further set of temporal puzzles.

If, on the other hand, rejecting any such notion of Purgatory, one endorsed the apparently uncomplicated alternative model of an immediate or eternal divine judgement effective at the point of death, did a person (whatever form that 'person' now took) promptly enter upon their very death-day into the quasi-temporal mode of either heavenly or hellish existence? Or might this model also be adapted to allow some quasi-temporal interval, even a certain number of 'days', between the time of death and any actual entry into Hell or Paradise? After all, Christ himself had, somehow and somewhere, spent 'three days' between his crucifixion and resurrection. Perhaps even, according to the Creed, some of it in Hell, liberating those imprisoned there. Moreover, in traditional Christian belief, there was not only the moment of death, and (perhaps) of individual judgement at that point in whatever passes for time in a posthumous state of existence, but in addition a final collective judgement, the Day of Judgement, in some way related both to the promised Second Coming of Christ on earth and to the universal resurrection of the dead.

Yet, on any of these models, how were these various times or events to be envisaged in relation to each other? In particular, how did any process of purgation in an individual case relate to the 'interval' between that person's death and the expected Second Coming of Christ on earth? Time for a personal judgement at least?

For example, if someone died several earthly centuries before the eventual Apocalypse, would they have thereby been given ample 'after-life-time' to purge their sins sufficiently so as to enter into heavenly bliss, perhaps even 'before' the Second Coming itself had been accomplished? Whereas in the case of someone who had died with such an accumulated weight of turpitude that they barely escaped the clutches of hell, but happened to die a mere few earthly days before the Second Coming occurred, and with it the expected final collective resurrection of the dead, would their individual purgatorial period be therefore completed comparatively 'quickly', thus awarding them a lesser sentence than if they had died centuries before? In either case, the ways of divine justice became even more bafflingly inscrutable and incalculable and the problems of calibrating posthumous time even more peculiar. Even odder than those involved in 'entering history'.

Obviously, in formulating the issues in this way I am abbreviating a development or series of complications which occurred over a considerable period within the theological reflections of the Christian community. It might be claimed that such puzzles about posthumous time are, were, or certainly should be, of only marginal significance, both then and now. Yet

the arguments around them were central to some of the changes which characterised the European Reformation. Indeed, they continue to confront us once we seriously try to make sense of the actual epitaphs and monuments before us. And, as stern mediaeval philosophers would have maintained, merely 'half-formed thoughts' won't do. Certainly, the blithe certitude with which, for example, today's American evangelists proclaim the forthcoming apocalypse, rapture, or final judgement would not have satisfied them.

Some theologians of the Reformation movement certainly saw the issue of Purgatory as of considerable importance and, broadly speaking, they repudiated the dominant mediaeval view that it was possible for the posthumous fate of an individual to be modified by the pious intervention of the living. They mostly suspected the very notion of prayers for or on behalf of the dead, and certainly rejected any practice of praying *to* the dead, asking for their intercession on behalf of the living. An initial attack on the patently corrupt practice of selling 'indulgences' led, almost inexorably, to this wholesale rejection but also initiated much larger transformations in religious practices and beliefs, thereby threatening not just the survival of such dubious activities but of religious belief itself.

It was clear from a general Reformed position that the basis of much of the wealth of the monasteries (perhaps indeed of 'the church' itself) was to be rejected as theologically invalid or 'offensive' and therefore to be repudiated in practice, since it was effectively derived from payments in various forms for praying on behalf of the dead. The practice of endowing local chantries or whole monasteries for such purposes was no longer to be regarded as an act of penitential almsgiving which would somehow benefit both the donor and the sinners in purgatory, but rather as an attempted violation of God's absolute and unchangeable judgement. The dissolution of monasteries was a logical implication.

The rejection of paying for prayers for the dead was thus one of the fundamental thresholds crossed by the Reformation. Even if beneficed clergy 'succeeded' chantry priests. The danger was that in questioning a specific pecuniary practice the legitimacy of praying *at all* was thereby also undermined, once prayer had lost one of its most popular functions and remained only as a matter of worship, celebration, and meditation. The various revisions of the Burial Service in successive authorised versions of the English *Book of Common Prayer* demonstrate the contending dilemmas. Yet the powerful illustrations of death's inexorable presence in, for example, John Day's influential printed *Book of Prayers* indicated that the predominant preoccupation of prayerful meditation continued to be death and mortality. Despite a variety of responses in ritual practice and official dogma, the questions discussed above were not so much resolved as repressed and avoided. Even though they still make themselves felt in the uncertain responses of today's visitors to this indoor cemetery called a cathedral.

Arguably implicit in these changes concerning prayer there was also a shift in the very conception of time, and eventually of the 'after-life' itself, but there was also an impact upon the notion of history, not least in how one was to write the history of this very change. For example, one way of looking at the Henrican Reformation was as an option both for a version of 'Royal Succession' and for the rejection or revision of a competing version of 'Apostolic Succession'. Both notions of 'succession' were thereby undermined.

I suggested earlier that what eventually took the place of traditional prayers for the dead was essentially a memorialising of the relationship between the dead individual and 'national' history. This was not surprising insofar as the Reformation in England included the insistent assertion of a national identity distinct from, and in some respects increasingly divorced from, a Christendom previously conceived more in pan-European and trans-national terms. That position lingers in some English attitudes today. In the process, the nature of historical writing itself was also arguably transformed.

As we continue to think about the 'history' into which we might envisage ourselves as 'entering' or having entered, we again have to ask how we understand the very notion of history. In pursuing that question we can usefully consider some specific examples of 'historical' writing directly associated with Canterbury Cathedral itself. We can then circle back to some of the various issues left suspended earlier. The first example more or less suggests itself, though I want to consider only one specific aspect of the 'history' of Thomas Becket.

Becket's deaths

Even Archbishop Chichele's tomb could not have competed in grandeur and magnificence with the burial place around which those of Henry IV and the Black Prince were once clustered, that of Thomas Becket. His tomb was the shrine of a saint and the focus of devotion for hundreds of thousands of pilgrims from England and across Europe over several centuries. One of the most significant moments of the Henrican Reformation was the complete demolition of Becket's shrine in 1538, justified theologically by a repudiation of those very practices just discussed of praying to and for the dead. The shrine had constituted an outstanding focus for precisely the traditional popular devotions and beliefs which the Reformers found so 'offensive'. The 1538 destruction was also given a political justification, since Becket could be represented as having defied royal rule in his own day and therefore as possibly providing a dangerous precedent for any popular opposition which Henry VIII saw it as necessary to suppress during his own conflict with the Roman church. It was also, of course, undeniably convenient that the King could thereby appropriate the

accumulated wealth incorporated into the shrine itself, estimated at some thirty-seven wagon-loads of jewels, gold, and so on.

When tourists reach the end of the nave today, they have a choice: either to proceed up the steps towards the spot where Becket's shrine was once situated, or to go down into the north west transept, the area known as the Martyrdom, where his death occurred. Later mediaeval pilgrims might not have proceeded via the nave at all but were directed from a side door through a tunnel under the choir steps directly to the martyrdom site and then up to the north choir aisle. The overall story of Becket is too well-known to re-tell it once more, but I want to use that story to think further about the nature of history.

There is, of course, a familiar and apparently simple preliminary distinction to be drawn between the history that happened and what gets written as history, the difference between historical events and history books. A persistent common-sense may assume that 'what happened' is or should be what is recounted in history books, and conversely that what gets written is what happened. However, in the case of Archbishop Thomas Becket what actually 'happened'? And how do we know 'what happened'? The events in 1170 which led to the establishment of the shrine to Becket were among those most written about at the time. We have more detailed contemporary accounts of Becket's death than, probably, of any other single incident occurring in the mediaeval period.

So we can begin an inquiry into the various historians associated with Canterbury Cathedral by considering the several accounts of Becket written within a very short time after his death. Some were by people who had personally known Becket, including perhaps five who had been present at the death itself. At least fourteen accounts of Becket were produced within twenty years of his death. The 19th-century editions of primary historical documents known as the Rolls Series included a substantial seven-volume compilation edited by James Craigie Robertson and J. B. Shepperd, entitled *Materials for the History of Archbishop Thomas Becket*. There are four volumes of biographical and other writings and three volumes of Becket's correspondence. It is worth simply listing the accounts printed in the *Materials* with indications of volume and page numbers for each author's account in order to give some idea of their scale. We can ignore for present purposes the three volumes of correspondence.

William of Canterbury was a Christ Church monk, ordained as a deacon by Becket himself in December 1170; his *Vita et passio S. Thomæ* [*Materials*, volume I, pp. 1-136] was written in 1173-74 as the preface to a substantial collection which William had compiled of accounts of miracles claimed to have taken place at the shrine [vol. I, pp. 137-546]. Brother Benedict was a Canterbury monk present at the death who became the first custodian of Becket's shrine and composed another book of miracles, based upon interviews with pilgrims [II, pp. 21-283]; his *Passio Sancti Thomæ* [II, pp. 1-19] was also probably written in 1173–74; he became prior of Canterbury in

1175 and Abbot of Peterborough in 1177; his account survives only in fragments but includes his eyewitness account of the death. John of Salisbury had been a close associate of Becket for many years and his brief *Vita Sancti Thomæ* [II, pp. 302-323] is an expanded version of a letter he wrote immediately after the death; he became Archbishop of Chartres in 1176 and was the author of several later works. Alan of Tewkesbury, who had returned to Canterbury in 1174 and became prior in 1179, edited Becket's correspondence in 1176 and prefaced that collection with his *Vita Sancti Thomæ,* or *Explanatio,* as a supplement to John of Salisbury's account [II, pp. 299-301, 323-352]. A visitor to Canterbury, Edward Grim, a clerk from Cambridgeshire, happened to be in the cathedral on the night of Becket's death and intervened to try to prevent it; his *Vita S. Thomæ* [II, pp. 353-451] was probably written as early as 1171-72. William Fitzstephen had been a secretary to both Becket and King Henry and his *Vita Sancti Thomæ* [III, pp. 1-154], written in 1173–74, is especially interesting on Becket's life as Chancellor to the King. Herbert of Bosham had also been a clerk to Becket as Chancellor and remained with him as Archbishop, but was in France in December 1170; his *Vita Sancti Thomæ* and other material [III, pp. 155-554] was probably not completed until 1184–86 but his *Life* is the longest and probably the most deliberately composed of the accounts published in the collection by Robertson and Shepperd. Also, included in volume IV, there are several anonymous lives, the first often attributed to Roger of Pontigny [IV, pp. 1-79], others simply known as Anonymous II, Anonymous III, and so on, with various additional extracts from contemporary manuscripts, and a version of the late twelfth-century compilation known as the *Quadrilogus* [IV, pp. 266-424] which incorporates and combines excerpts from some of the 'lives' already listed. Not included in the *Materials* volumes are a nearly contemporary French life of Becket written in verse by Garnier and a substantial early account in Icelandic. Even without these additional overseas sources, there are at least a thousand pages of more less contemporary biographical accounts of Becket.

'what happened'

Surely, with all this contemporary written material, we know 'what happened'.

The renowned Benedictine historian and Cambridge Regius Professor Dom David Knowles once remarked that the events in Canterbury Cathedral on the afternoon of 29 December 1170 were recounted by a collection of reporters, contemporaries, and eyewitnesses, more fully than was any other single incident in the entire European Middle Ages.

> There is probably no hour in medieval history of which the details are so well known, and so revealing of character, as is the last hour of the archbishop's life, from about half-past two to half-past three on that dark December afternoon.

Partly based upon such contemporary accounts, there have been numerous biographies and studies of Becket ever since, though surprisingly little of the *Materials* volumes has been fully translated into English. One selection and translation, Michael Staunton's *The Lives of Thomas Becket* (2001), attempted to compose a continuous narrative of Becket's life and death by interweaving numerous short excerpts from a dozen or so twelfth-century accounts, but this downplayed the disparities between the various versions of 'what happened'.

A very different approach was taken by Edwin Abbott in his two-volume work *Thomas of Canterbury*, published in 1898, which focuses only upon the death and the miracles. Abbott deliberately juxtaposed the various eyewitness accounts of the events surrounding Becket's death, so as to highlight the differences and incompatibilities between them. What emerges from his detailed work is a realisation that even a multitude of extant eye-witness or near-contemporary descriptions cannot guarantee that we can ever know exactly 'what happened' on that single afternoon in 1170, and that, however closely we scrutinise the sources, we can offer no finally definitive narrative. Abbott's two volumes can now be easily downloaded from the internet and can be examined in full, so I will offer only a few excerpts.

Abbott usefully arranges the source material into numbered pericopes, with the particular author indicated in brackets. He prints both the Latin texts and his own English translations, which I here mainly reproduce. Though the general assertion is routinely made that historical sources can be unreliable, untrustworthy, or inexact, it is unusual to have available such a clear demonstration of the problem.

Consider first this apparently straightforward description of the Knights pursuing Becket, from Edward Grim's account:

> *[43] (i) (Grim).* Without delay the murderers return, with hauberks, swords, hatchets and axes, and other implements suitable for the accomplishment of the crime. And finding the doors barred, and not opened at their knocking, they turn aside by a less public way through an orchard to a wooden barrier, hacking, and cleaving, and crashing it away. Frightened by the uproar and terrible crashing, the servants, and almost all the clerks, like sheep before wolves, scattered in every direction.

But William Fitzstephen who was himself a clerk and, as Abbott notes, seems to have garnered much of his information from the episcopal household servants, writes:

> *[46] (Fitzstephen).* Osbert, and Algar, and certain other servants of the Archbishop, seeing that the armed men were rushing in, closed the hall door and barred it firmly. Seeing this, Robert de Broc began to hew away at a kind of party-wall, and, getting in that way, threw open the hall door to those parricides, inflicting severe blows and wounds on those who had barred it. *[47]* We, too, we clerks, seated inside with the Archbishop, we heard these blows of Robert de Broc as he hewed away the party-wall. What but fear and trembling came on us, monks, and clerks, and companions of the Archbishop !

Garnier's pedestrian verse (here translated from Norman French, with line-breaks indicated by /) has a different emphasis, patently designed to suggest a comparison with Christ's apostles fleeing in the Garden of Gethsemane:

> *[57] (Garnier).* When the people of St. Thomas heard them come, / As sheep before wolves they made haste to flee : / Even as the Apostles when they saw Jesus seized / By Pilate's band —Jesus, who, in order to die, / Had come into the world, to found His Church. / There was not one left of all his servants. / Save a few of his clerks, of whom he had many and brave there, /And only Master Grim, and monks I know not how many, / These seized St. Thomas, who still kept sitting /And waiting for death and the end of his years.

Comparing these accounts, here is an easy exam question for you: did Becket's servants all flee, or only some of them, and did any, none, or most of the clerks or monks stay with him?

Abbott adds the following from the popular 19th-century account by Dean Stanley in his *Historical Memorials of Canterbury*, published in 1854:

> *[63] (i) (Stanley).* The dialogue was interrupted by one of the monks rushing in to announce that the knights were arming. "Let them arm" said Becket. But in a few minutes the violent assault on the door of the hall, and the crash of a wooden partition in the passage from the orchard, announced that danger was close at hand. The monks, with that extraordinary timidity which they always seem to have displayed, instantly fled, leaving only a small body of his intimate friends or faithful attendants. They united in entreating him to take refuge in the cathedral. "No," he said, "fear not; all monks are cowards!"

Stanley's bias against mediaeval monks, not untypical of mid-19th century Anglican attitudes in England, is clear, if not clearly justified by the sources. But did Becket actually say what Stanley quotes him as saying?

Consider the following excerpts from four different sources:

> *[50] (5) (Benedict).* But some ran to warn the Archbishop, shouting, "My lord, my lord, they are arming." "Why care for that?" replied he: "let them arm."

> *[52] (7) (Anon. I).* Meanwhile the knights, having come out [of the palace], put on their armour to attack an unarmed man. For the rest of the knights (or, soldiers), who had waited outside while these [i.e. the four knights] were talking with the man of God, had come with hauberks on, under their surcoats. When word of this was brought to the Archbishop, the monks said to him, "My lord, come into the church : for these men are making themselves ready to take or kill you." "I do not fear them," he replied, "I will await here God's pleasure."

> *[54] (10) (Anon. V).* Then they [the knights] departed, retiring no great way from the door of the palace. Nay, in the episcopal court itself, donning their armour, they prepared themselves for returning. Seeing this, those who were round the Bishop [*sic*] besought him to seek the safer refuge of the monastery. But he replied, "It is not fitting, my brethren, that the church should be polluted with the blood of sinners. It is better to wait here. Whatever is in store must be patiently endured."

> *[56] (12) (Garnier).* "Sire," said the monks, "go to the Minster, / Now are they singing vespers; you should not be absent, / These knights desire to take or slay you." "No whit for that," replied he, "will ye see me dismayed. / Here will I await all that God shall judge [best] for me."

In addition to these variously recounted versions, the more or less corresponding moment is given by William Fitzstephen (who was a lay servant, not a monk) as:

> *[47] (Fitzstephen).* Then said the monks, a good many of whom were attending on him, "My lord, go into the church." "Never," said he; "fear not! Most monks are too timorous and fainthearted."

That Dean Stanley should have selected Fitzstephen's version is perhaps not surprising. But what are we to make of the variety of responses offered in the different accounts as direct quotations of what Becket actually said? Whatever we think of the disparities, as slight or significant, Becket surely

did not say all the words here variously attributed to him. But precisely what words did Becket say?

The problem of alleged direct speech occurs throughout the accounts, as in the following:

> *[100] (i) (Grim).* They also hasten to keep off the foe from the slaughter of their Shepherd by barring the folding-doors of the church. But the admirable Champion [of God] turned to them and commanded the doors to be opened, saying, "It is not seemly to make into a tower the house of prayer, the church of Christ, which, even though it be not closed, suffices its children for a stronghold; and by suffering, rather than by fighting, shall we triumph over the foe; for indeed we have come to suffer [violence], not to fight against it."

That Becket instantly improvised this short but well-phrased sermon might be less difficult to believe than that Edward Grim recorded it *verbatim.* But the several other sources offer interesting variations:

> *[101] (2) (Fitzstephen).* [Becket] turned back and came down from the steps, forbidding the closing of the church door, and saying, "Far be it from us to make a castle out of the church of God. Let all come into the church of God that wish to come in. God's will be done."

> *[104] (4) (William of Canterbury).* He replied, "Go, complete the divine service as is proper." And standing back, near the door, he said, "As long as you hold the entrance, I will not enter in." On their retiring, he stepped inside the Minster, but [again] stood back on the threshold, and driving back the common folk, who crowded round him as though to see some spectacle, "What is it," he asked, "that these folk fear?" Answer was made, "The armed men in the cloister." "I am going forth," he said, " to meet them." . . . Meanwhile, as the clerks were making a great confusion, and some of the brethren were setting up an iron bar against [the door], "Away," cried he, "faint of heart! Let these blind wretches work their mad will! On your duty of obedience we bid you not to close fast the door."

> *[106] (Benedict).* But the holy Father stepped back, and began speedily to rebuke them, saying, "Suffer my people to enter." And he went to meet them, and, thrusting away now this one, now that one from the folding-doors, he with his own most sacred hands began to drag his people into the church—for they had been left outside the doors to the jaws of the wolves—saying, "Come inside, come inside, with all speed" :—[which came to pass] that he might be able to say with the Lord, "Those whom thou hast given me, I have not lost one of them."

[109] (7) (Anon. I). They [the monks] closed against them [the knights] the doors of the church. But seeing that the doors were being closed, the man of God said to them, "By your holy obedience I order that they be opened without delay. For we ought not to make a castle of the house of God." A second time did the monks [now] seize the man of God and began to escort him by the steps into the choir. "Let me be," he said to them, "and go back. You have naught to do here. Suffer God, according to His will, to arrange concerning His own business."

[110] (8) (Anon. II). They barred the folding-doors behind him. But he presently had them opened, saying, "Far be it that we should make the church of God a castle."

[112] (Garnier). Some of the monks closed the doors against them; "Open," said St. Thomas; and himself began opening them. "By [your] holy obedience," said he, "I command you: Let them do their will, these who have come forward." "As long as ye close these doors, I will not go a step forward. No man must make a castle, or fortress, or tower of the house of God, the true Lord, But we clerks, who are ministers and servitors thereof, Are bound to be evermore thereof defenders, [And] to make of our body a shield against the evil-doer." *[113]* The doors himself he opens and unbars.

Clearly, in these several instances it is not only a matter of deciding which words Becket actually said but also of choosing between the different actions which accompanied those alleged words. There is no easy way to reconcile these divergent accounts of what was happening in the immediate vicinity of the door into the cathedral itself. It is also worth remarking that most of the sources are written in Latin, even though Becket probably addressed the knights in Norman French. Even Garnier's version, though itself written in Norman French verse, was based upon interviews conducted by Garnier with Canterbury bystanders who quite possibly spoke Latin or even English to him. In any case, I have been quoting not the original Latin but Abbott's 19th-century translations into modern English.

I am tempted to quote also from T. S. Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral*. Let me instead conclude these entangled excerpts by giving William Fitzstephen the last word:

[126] (2) (Fitzstephen). Just when he was in the act of coming down from the steps toward the door, lest it should be closed, John of Salisbury and all his other clerks—except Robert the Canon, and William Fitzstephen, and Edward Grim (who had newly come to him)—seeking some protection, and making it their [only] care to place themselves in safety, left the Archbishop, and made away, some for altars, some for hiding-places.

> *[127]* And indeed had the Archbishop been willing to turn [a little] aside, and to free himself with the protection of flight, he might right well have availed himself of opportunities, both of time and place, not needing to be sought but offering themselves to be used. It was evening. The long night of the winter solstice was at hand. The crypt was near, full of winding passages, mostly very dark. Another door, too, was near, through which he might have gone up by a spiral staircase to the arched chambers in the roof of the church.

Fitzstephen here makes sure that he at least is personally exempted from the accusation of fleeing from the scene which he claims to have witnessed. Of course, he suggests, if Becket himself had fled to safety the subsequent history of the cathedral would have been quite different. What did *not* happen is part of 'what happened'. The narrow door to the winding staircase mentioned by Fitzstephen is still there, next to Archbishop Pecham's tomb. So too are the door from the cloister through which Becket came, and the steps down to the crypt. After several re-buildings and removals, little else remains of the physical setting of the murder: the various chapels, tombs, and pillars which were there at the time have, like the events themselves, gone into 'history'.

events

If we try to reconcile the differing narratives to construct an exact sequence of events on that December afternoon it may seem that we are being distracted or frustrated by relatively trivial differences in the various accounts, concerning for example the exact route taken around the cloister or an unclear business about a broken lock. Yet what that frustration brings home to us is that though we can still stand in the very doorway through which Becket passed and look either way along the alleys of (a later partial rebuilding of) the cloisters, and though we can perhaps stand on the exact spot were (we think) Becket died, the actual events which occurred simply do not now exist. Nobody can now be an eyewitness of that pursuit and death and can thereby settle our questions about precisely what happened and who said what to whom.

With the several different sources directly to hand, we can try to imagine those events. We might even reconstruct them with well-rehearsed actors playing the various roles, and perhaps film them as realistically as possible. Yet those people and actions no longer exist. Any more, we might add, than the precise moment which we photographed five minutes ago in the nave. History, from one perspective, can be regarded as a matter of both events and people having become nothing, as having disappeared into non-existence, into a kind of empty-ness.

Except perhaps for a few physical traces still remaining (some of which in Becket's case became 'relics') and the representations, in written texts, or

sometimes images, which tried to describe, depict, or account for them. There are also, we might claim, the perhaps discernible consequences and after-effects we can try to attribute to specific historical events. Becket's death, after all, still motivates some pilgrims to visit the cathedral.

We might regard such a view of history as simply obvious. Even, or especially, if we rarely think about it. Nevertheless, we have to recognise that this notion of 'history' was not shared by Becket's contemporaries. They did not believe that he had simply ceased to exist at his death, but rather that his life *after* his death was if anything even more significant than the life recorded by his biographers.

Hundreds of pages of the *Materials* volumes are devoted to accounts of miracles believed to have been worked by Becket after his death. Edwin Abbott began his 1898 book thus:

> Thomas, Archbishop of Canterbury, was murdered on Tuesday, 29th December 1170. Three days later, Emma, wife of a knight in Sussex, wept for him as a martyr, and, while weeping and praying, recovered from a temporary attack of blindness. On the Sunday afterwards, Huelina, in Gloucestershire, recovered from a terrible complaint in the head that had troubled her for years (taking away all power of motion for days together) — and this immediately after her mother Aaliza, of London, had professed faith in Thomas as a martyr and had pledged her daughter to a pilgrimage to the place of his death.
>
> So says Benedict, the author of the earliest treatise on St. Thomas's miracles, and few will dispute that his statements are correct. Of course, it may be said about these two cases that, in each, the recovery was a mere coincidence, or a sequel, not a result. But a glance at Benedict's book will shew that the coincidence theory soon breaks down. There are too many of such "coincidences" or "sequels" to be explained under either heading. In a large number of these cases probably, and in some certainly, men and women were instantaneously or rapidly healed, in a way in which an ordinary physician could not have healed them; and the most reasonable statement of the cause is that it was a strong emotional shock conveyed to them through faith in the late Archbishop whom people now called Saint and Martyr.

Not too many of today's readers will easily concur with the implications of Abbott's judgement of Benedict's miracle stories that: 'few will dispute that his statements are correct'. Moreover, whether we might even characterise Becket as a saint, let alone as a miracle-worker, is clearly not just a matter of assessing the sources to decide 'what happened'. No amount of detailed narrative is likely to settle that question, since at the very least it depends upon an agreement concerning the curious notion of saint-hood. Abbott goes on:

> Facts like these are more helpful than volumes of vague generalities, or even acute discussions of political questions, in bringing before us the attitude of the poorer classes in England in the great contest between Henry II and his former Chancellor. They were for the Archbishop, as the champion of the poor and of righteousness—or, perhaps, more negatively, their defender against brutalizing encroachments of rapacity, violence, and lust. It does not seem to have been with them, primarily, a national question, English against French,—though in a few of the miracles, and especially the notable one of Eilward of Westoning, there appears in the burgesses a sense of resentment against the law of mutilation for theft and its hard administration. Fundamentally, their zeal for the Martyr was a zeal for him as the representative of the oppressed in either nation, French or English, and strongest among the English simply because the English were most oppressed.
>
> From these and many other stories to be found in the following pages, it is manifest that the memory of the murdered Archbishop had a great power in shaping political results, and still more in moulding the character of the people, during that memorable generation which witnessed the signing of Magna Charta.

The implications of Abbott's claim here, and his suggested link between the cult of Becket and Magna Carta, might strike us as – at least – unexpected and, in its own way, almost as problematic as his claims concerning the miracle stories. We might extrapolate and ask whether the 'memory' of something that did not happen (a 'miracle') could have 'had a great power in shaping' history. Abbott's work on Becket's life and miracles was intended as a preliminary exercise for a study of the 'life and miracles' of Jesus Christ, including the different gospel accounts of the empty tomb. Abbott also wrote, it may be worth mentioning, that curious quasi-science-fiction fable *Flatlands*.

Among the more extraordinary aspects of the Becket story is the fact that so many ordinary individuals had their own lives partly recorded in the miracle catalogues of Canterbury. It was not only the eminent Archbishop whose life was promptly written about but also the life-changing incidents or 'miracles' recounted by many scores of lowly others. And still multitudes of ordinary people come to visit what is now not even an empty tomb but an absent shrine.

Clearly, what is at stake in assessing these accounts of the miracles as well as the lives of Becket, is not only a matter of deciding 'what happened' but also 'which happened', or even could happen. Not simply which account we are to credit but a judgement concerning the overall significance of the events, including questions as to whether we call the death a murder or a martyrdom or both, or how we assess Henry's intentions, and in what overall framework we might situate the struggle between Becket and Henry.

A modern scholarly volume, which reprinted a number of academic articles and other writings offering radically different views upon Becket, concluded as follows:

> The readings in this book represent a miniscule sampling of materials that have accumulated for nine hundred years. They pose some of the questions that historians, novelists, poets, preachers, and playwrights have pondered for generation upon generation, broad questions about the nature of power in society, about the interaction between personal rivals, about forces of change in conflict with forces resisting change.
>
> What about the two principals, Henry and Becket? Was the king a tyrant, ruthless and perfidious, as Milman and others suggest? Or was he, in spite of the acknowledged Angevin temper, a reasonable advocate of legitimate goals, frustrated by the stubbornness of the archbishop and his allies? Was he, as Stubbs suggests, "a moderate and politic conqueror," or did he seek, as Berington writes, "to gratify revenge, and to triumph in the humiliation of a man who had dared to oppose him?"
>
> Did Henry try to take advantage of the good will of his friend, or did Becket reject and attack the friend who had promoted him from the obscurity of his low estate to the second most powerful position in the land? Was Becket an ambitious climber who used and then turned against those who had helped him, including the king?
>
> Perhaps the issue was entirely separate from personalities, and the two comrades whose intimacy turned to bitter hostility were simply victims of pressure neither could withstand. If so, what were the sources of the pressure? Was it the growth of a centralized monarchy, whose full development required control over courts, castles, and income? Was the church a major impediment to its growth? Or conversely, was the burgeoning interest in canon law (whose disciples included Becket as well as Pope Alexander III and John of Salisbury) the new force, while Henry's followers upheld a feudal reaction against it? Pollock and Maitland point out that starting with Henry's time "the lay courts rather than the spiritual are the aggressors and the victors in nearly every contest."
>
> A separate question that this volume raises is: how have the different centuries viewed the controversy? Were twelfth-century writers concerned about the same questions that concerned nineteenth-century writers? If they were different, how and why were they different? Did the nineteenth-century sense of history as progress affect its interpretation of the Becket affair? Have twentieth-century writers lost interest in its issues, or has the interest taken new forms?
>
> [*The Becket Controversy*, edited by Thomas M. Jones, 1970, p. 160f.]

For my concerns, however, these perfectly proper academic questions don't go quite to the nub of the matter. Though our interpretations of 'which happened' may well shape our decisions as to 'what happened', and which sources deserve credence or preference, it is the very notion of past happenings that intrigues me.

Arguably, it was his death which made Thomas Becket a significant historical figure. Without his murder or martyrdom it is doubtful if many would now recall the career of Chancellor Thomas Becket or Archbishop Becket, or that his life would be regarded as having major historical consequences. Even if he had been involved in a conflict with Henry II, went into exile, but had simply died in exile, who now would remember Becket apart from specialist historians, experts in the period?

It was his death and the way in which it occurred, and especially the place where it happened, that has persistently raised questions about his life and his after-life. The cult of the dead Becket undoubtedly reinvigorated the fortunes of the cathedral itself and it was, we might say, the martyrdom rather than the life which shaped subsequent historical events. It has even been suggested that Henry undertook his invasion of Ireland, with all its momentous consequences, in order to avoid immediately confronting the consequences of his role in Becket's death.

To take an apparently more parochial example, without that martyrdom in 1170 the later attempt to transfer the seat of the ecclesiastical primacy in England from Canterbury to London would probably have been successful. Archbishop Baldwin, Becket's immediate successor, came close in any case to moving the 'college' of the Archbishop to Harbledown (!) and later archbishops prioritised Lambeth Palace, across the Thames from Parliament. It is a not wholly trivial matter in the history of England, and of the global Anglican church, that without Becket's murder there might have been no subsequent 'Archbishops of Canterbury' to list on a plaque: they and the title would now have been missing from a different history.

I am reminded again of Walter Benjamin's enigmatic remark about envisaging history as empty. Should we conceive of Becket's death as creating a strange kind of black hole in history, where the rest of Becket's life might have been? Should we consider that those 'Archbishops of Harbledown' or of Lambeth who never existed have left their empty seats permanently unoccupied, always *sede vacante*? It might be plausible to construct some kind of hypothetical alternative history in which Becket escaped up the spiral staircase or down into the dark crypt. But what then of all those others who are memorialised in the cathedral and whose lives were also cut short: are we to conceptualise or imagine a multiplicity of alternative narratives which never occurred but which, in *not* happening, nevertheless in part constituted the history which did once happen? After all, if we consider that events which did happen no longer exist, any more than those which did not happen, that Becket's death is only 'in the past', is there then a resonance with the questions raised earlier concerning the

status of those who are 'remembered' but are not actually 'present' in the nave's memorials? Not only when but, we might even ask, where is 'history'?

I leave these considerations again suspended, for a time, as we continue this meandering meditation on history, time, and the dead, by considering two Canterbury writers now almost unknown and forgotten. As well as offering an account of these writers, I am deliberately asking some basic, perhaps merely banal, questions in order slowly to probe some genuine puzzles. Moreover, parts of the next segment may seem somewhat laborious, even monotonous, but that is deliberate. I might say: just take your time.

ANON & STONE

The voluminous documentation around the death of one individual, Thomas Becket, can be contrasted with the way in which the deaths of many thousands are recorded by a chronicler whose own name remains unknown. He was designated simply as 'Anonymous of Canterbury' in the first modern edition of his work, a volume which also included a chronicle by John of Reading. The *Chronica Johannis de Reading et Anonymi Cantuariensis 1346-1367* was edited by James Tait and published by Manchester University Press in 1914.

As it happens, my copy of this edition once belonged to William Urry, the renowned 20th-century archivist and historian of Canterbury. His posthumous *The Last Days of Becket* attempted to establish the most detailed account possible of the immediate circumstances of Becket's death, while his major work, *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings*, unearthed an extraordinary amount of information concerning almost every twelfth-century household in Canterbury, thereby providing perhaps the most comprehensive mapping of the ordinary population of a mediaeval English city. It is characteristic that Urry should have recorded in his copy the precise date on which he first read the *Anonymous Chronicle*. Though probably written in Canterbury, the 'chronicle' is not directly about Canterbury, but its concerns are relevant to issues we have already raised in relation to the nave.

There are four extant manuscripts of the chronicle, three of them variously associated with Canterbury, including what was probably the author's autograph. The first printed edition, by Henry Wharton, a canon of the cathedral, in his *Anglia Sacra* published in 1691, was over-confident in ascribing the anonymous chronicle to a named monk of Canterbury, Stephen Birchington. There is also a recent edition published in 2008 which provides a translation and restores the text for the years 1357 to 1364 which was missing from the manuscript used in the 1914 edition. In just over 70 modern printed pages, the *Anonymous Chronicle* covers the years from 1346

to 1365 with a brief addition concerning 1367. (*Chronicon Anonymi Cantuariensis*, edited Charity Scott Stokes and Christopher Given-Wilson, OUP, 2008)

We can plunge straight into Anon's work and make some comments later. The Chronicle text begins:

> In the year of Our Lord 1346, the king of England, perceiving the many deceitfully conciliatory words of the French, and realizing that he would not be able to make good his right which he possesses by hereditary succession in and to the French kingdom except by widespread use of the sword, landed at La Hougue in Normandy on 17 July that same year with his army. Waiting in the said port of La Hougue was Bertrand, marshal of France, who had undertaken on pain of his head to the aforesaid Philip, self-styled king of France, that he would guard the said port safely with two hundred men-at-arms so that the king of England and his army would not under any circumstances be able to enter the land of France; for which reason the aforesaid marshal blocked up the port of La Hougue and that at Barfleur, insofar as he could, with stakes, and gathered together an army of at least one thousand mounted men and more than six thousand foot soldiers in order to resist the king of England with might and force of arms.

Even without knowing the full historical context, we can recognise some familiar themes here, especially the claim to royal 'succession' by right, and the usual willingness to go to war to enforce such a claim. But a king can't wage war alone and a defence can't be mounted by just one man. Here, at least 'a thousand cavalry' and 'six thousand foot soldiers' are summarily mentioned, on just the French side. Another entry, another decade, another claim, but the same basic story:

> In the year of Our Lord 1355, Edward king of England, in order to enforce his right to the kingdom of France through hereditary succession from his mother, the daughter and heiress of Lord Philip the Fair, former king of France, dispatched his first-born son Edward, then prince of Wales and aged twenty-five years or more, to be his captain in Gascony, together with the earls of Warwick and Salisbury, Lord Reginald Cobham, Lord Stephen Cossington, knights, and others from the kingdom of England, with a very large army and navy, in order to make war against Lord John, the selfstyled king of France.

This time we have a 'very large army' almost as a parenthetical after-thought to the naming of several high-titled individuals, a king, a prince (the Black Prince), and various lords. In other entries, such named individuals are listed as setting out for war, and their names are then followed by mere numbers, as in the entry for 1359:

> The names of the lords who set out with the king of England for war in France:
> Lord Edward king of England with 1,000 men-at-arms and 1,400 archers;
> Lord Edward prince of Wales with 600 men-at-arms and 840 archers;
> Lord Lionel earl of Ulster with 180 men-at-arms and 100 archers;
> Lord John earl of Richmond with 200 men-at-arms and 400 archers.

The pattern continues for another sixteen names, with their accompanying troops as merely enumerated units. Another entry gives a list of those killed in the battle of Poitiers:

> The marshal of Clermont. The viscount of Aulnay. The viscount of Brosse. The viscount of Rochechouart. Lord R[enaud] of Pons. Lord Geoffrey Charny. Lord Geoffrey Matha. The lord of Landas. Lord Eustace of Ribemont. Lord Andrew of Chany. Lord John of Lisle. Lord William of Noyre. Lord Robert Hangest. The lord of Chateauvillain. The lord of Montjean. The lord of Argenton. The lord of Sancerre. Lord Louis de Brosse, the son of the lord of Montaigu. And in addition to the aforesaid lords who were slain, another one thousand eight hundred men and persons, among whom were one thousand men-at-arms, knights, and valets.

Perhaps symptomatically, the 'thousand' (*mille*) in the phrase 'one thousand eight hundred men and persons' (*homines et persone*) is omitted in most of the manuscripts and has been supplied by the modern editors from a later marginal correction in the Lambeth manuscript (Lambeth MS 99) of the chronicle.

This entry is even more laconic:

> Also, on the Saturday before the said battle of Poitiers, the following were captured: The count of Joigny. The count of Auxerre. The marshal of Burgundy. And in addition to those who were captured, 240 men-at-arms were slain.

The final entry of the continuation of the chronicle is in the same mode:

> Those slain in the battle of Najera: Inigo Lopez of Orosco, Sancho Sanchez of Rojas, Garcilaso de la Vega, Gonsalvo Gomez of Siveris, Alvaro Fernandez of Bosco, Lord Juan Sarmiento, and others, to a total of five or six thousand good men-at-arms, not counting innumerable light horsemen, pavisers, and sergeants.

The translation of the Latin '*exceptis* . . *sine numero*' as 'not counting innumerable' seems particularly apt. Though it presumably mattered to the 'good men-at-arms' themselves whether Death stopped counting at five thousand or at six thousand. Especially if you were one of the extra thousand.

The modern editors of the chronicle are able to supply a footnote and some biographical information on almost all the lordly individuals listed so grandly in these various entries. This usefully clarifies confusion, since the text frequently uses titles rather than names and the same person may go under different titles in differently dated entries, including as signatures to oaths. The foot-soldiers remain throughout simply rounded-up and anonymous numbers.

It is perhaps appropriate, or ironic, that the deaths of so many anonymous thousands are recorded by a chronicler whose own name remains unknown. One might claim, of course, that listing the individual names of ordinary soldiers would simply have been impossible, or impractical. We might, however, register that this is a variation on the deep-seated distinction between named Officers and namelessly enumerated 'Other Ranks' observable on some of those military memorial tablets in the cathedral nave.

Familiar as this practice may be, we can nevertheless pause to consider the relationship between the way these deaths are recorded and some assumptions governing the 'history' which is recounted. The narrative of this period is often told as primarily a matter of contested 'successions', of alleged hereditary claims to power and territory, but the conflicts are also represented as 'wars' conducted between 'nations', rather than as, say, a series of brutal turf battles between rival warrior gangs or as vicious clan contests. As if the conflicts of power-hungry and fortune-seeking war-lords were to be regarded by those who did most of the fighting as being waged on their patriotic behalf.

This attitude encapsulates a degree of indifference to the ordinary participants in battles, which itself matches some basic features of the overall socio-economic system. The battles are fought over the alleged rights of 'succession' to land and power of a small class or network of families within the society, yet it is, or was, assumed as both right and necessary that historically anonymous thousands might die for the implementation of those contested claims.

This is not a way of thinking likely to be much modified simply by zooming in on the data, by trying to unearth the actual names of the merely numbered dead. Involved is a basic premise concerning the agents of 'history': that some have names, while others are only digits. Hollywood movies evince a similar attitude to the numerous collateral casualties who can be slaughtered in droves so that the star hero can 'succeed', but at least the scrolling names of the otherwise anonymous film 'extras' may fleetingly appear in the long list of credits.

We might ask what precisely is the status of those who are recorded in history only as collective numbers. Their very existence, one might say, is even more hollowed out than, for example, the un-named but individualised 'fanatic' who 'assassinated' Captain Charles Agnew in the memorial inscription mentioned earlier. How are we to think of a history comprised not only of what happened and of what did not happen, but also of those not recorded except as blank noughts? Those military campaigns were constituted by lives and deaths which have left the barest traces in the written record, often simply a string of zeroes, of conveniently rounded-up totals.

From 1950s Poland, after the war-time extermination of one-fifth of the population, including almost the entire Jewish community, we can recall two short poems:

> History's skeletons are recorded in round figures
> A thousand and one becomes just a thousand
> The odd one might never have existed.
>
> (Szymborska)

> That old woman who leads a goat on a string
> is more necessary and more precious
> than the seven wonders of the world
> whoever thinks and feels
> that she is not necessary
> is guilty of genocide.
>
> (Rozewicz)

JOHN STONE

At this point, I want to introduce a rather different Canterbury chronicler, whose name we know was John Stone. I shall say more about him later but first I want to contrast his way of writing with that of Anon.

The sole surviving manuscript is now included in MS 417 in Corpus Christi College, Cambridge. It is written in Latin, which I have translated fairly literally. After a few pages concerning Stone himself, the manuscript begins with the following sequence. The opening entry may concern a relative of the author though there is no explicit indication of a connection.

> William Stone
>
> In the year of the Lord 1415, the granger William Stone died on Tuesday, the day following the feast of St. Martin the Bishop, in his forty-eighth year as a monk, and was buried in the crypt in front of the

altar of the blessed Saints Katherine and Magdalene. He was a most decent man and of great stature among all those we saw in those days.

Thomas Oxenford

The same year, the granger Thomas Oxford died on the feast of Saints Vedast and Amand, in his twenty-sixth year as a monk.

Thomas Midilton

In the same year, Brother Thomas Midilton died on the thirty-first day of March, in his fifteenth year as a monk, being then first in rank in the lower choir. He was previously a monk of Bermondsay, near the city of London.

John Hethe

In 1416 John Hethe with licence from the pope retired to take up a benefice near Gravesend, in his twenty-sixth year as a monk. And after a few years he died, having none of the spiritual benefits of being in the community.

John Langle

John Langle died on the sixth day of the month of September, in his twenty-sixth year as a monk. He duly received the sacraments provided by the Church, and lay on the stone with his face uncovered during the prayers of commendation.

John Kynton

John Kynton died on the night following the feast of St. Luke the Evangelist in his sixth year as a monk, and was buried in the infirmary chapel between the two columns facing the cemetery entrance. Before he became a monk, he was in secular life an important and powerful man, of great reputation, and held office at the court of King Henry IV to whom he was protonotary, and chancellor to Queen Joan, and also in various places beyond the realm of England served frequently as an ambassador of the king and the kingdom.

This opening sequence does not, I agree, offer the most fascinating or exciting reading. But I have deliberately given several consecutive entries since I want to convey the cumulative effect of this way of recording. I will however spare you the next forty or so similar entries which follow until the character of the manuscript changes briefly at folio 17, when there are a few pages recording particular events from the reign of Henry V, somewhat out of sequence. The rest of the manuscript includes, amid a variety of other material, over a hundred more such short obituaries for brother monks, recording when they died, and in particular the rites which accompanied each funeral.

Though he indicates the year for each set of entries, what mainly concerns Stone is the specific day on which the named individuals died,

because these departed fellow-monks will be commemorated not once but many times, each by name on their remembrance day in the annual cycle. The primary concern of the entries is thus to remember by name the departed members and lay benefactors of the community. Their earthly lives are summarily recorded, but what is important is that they have now left this round of worldly events and have gone into another realm and another time: the communal liturgy which will repeat their names in the respectful round of ritual, the annual cycle of commemoration – one of the spiritual benefits which John Hethe missed by leaving the monastery.

The manuscript consists predominantly of these brief obituary notices of Stone's fellow monks, some similar remembrances of a few monks from the other Canterbury monastery Saint Augustine's, and a dozen or so laymen who were in various ways associates of Christ Church. It also includes several entries recording such regular occasions as the consecration of holy oils, liturgical processions, ordinations, special sermons, and promotions within the monastery. It sometimes notes visits by eminent ecclesiastical dignitaries, and exceptional events such as extreme weather. In April 1449, for example, a snowstorm and an earthquake are briefly recorded, before the next entry returns to the familiar account of the death of another brother monk (fol. 40a):

> The Great Snow
>
> Two days later, a great snow fell in the middle of the night.
>
> Earthquake
>
> This year, on the feast of St. George the Martyr, after midnight, between the hours of three and four, there was a great earthquake that lasted for the space of one paternoster and more.
>
> Walter Halstead
>
> On the tenth day of the month of May, in the twelfth hour, at dinner time, Brother Walter Halstead died, professed monk of Christ Church Canterbury, and he lay in the choir for the whole night and had fifty psalms.

Here is another typical sequence, from 1460 (fol. 67a):

> Brother William Coventry
>
> Next in this year on the penultimate day of August, Saturday, died brother William Coventry, monk priest and professed of Christ Church Canterbury, in the middle of the night. In the morning he had the commendation by the prior Thomas Goldstone and the community, and lay with his face uncovered in the infirmary chapel throughout the commendation. He was buried by the prior on the same day, being in his twenty-first year as a monk.

Thomas Aldyntone

Next in this year on the last day of the month of August, a Sunday, brother Thomas Aldyntone was examined concerning his account by the precentor Robert Bynne in the presence of the seniors. And the third prior sat next to the precentor in front of the seniors because the sub-prior was away at our Eastry manor with other brothers.

Brother Willelmus Stokbery

Next in this year on the 2nd of March at the fourth hour after Nones died brother William Stokbery, monk priest and professed of the church of Christ Canterbury, in his 43rd year as a monk. And the following day he lay on the stone in the infirmary chapel with his face uncovered, and had the commendation from the prior T. G. and the community.

Brother Ricardus Borden

Next in this year on the 10th of March died brother Richard Borden, monk priest and professed of Christ Church Canterbury, the prior's chaplain, in his [*blank*] year as a monk. And the same day he had the commendation by the prior and the community, and had fifty psalms in the choir, and was buried by the prior.

Next in this year on the feastday of St Edward king and martyr there was no procession inside the church, as the usual custom is on such principal feastdays, because of a procession for peace in the city.

*

As a note on the cover page of the manuscript makes clear, this 'Book of John Stone' was 'composed as a result of his great work in the year 1467 in his fiftieth year as a monk', and the first page adds:.

For the future record of things. In the year of grace 1418, namely, on the second day after the feast of St. Lucy the Virgin, Brother John Stone was received as a monk into the holy church of Canterbury and was accepted for the monastic habit, in the time of John Wodennisberg as Prior. Thereafter, he lived in the religious life for fifty years sustained by the grace of the Holy Spirit, as is to be hoped for. He then, lest they be passed down to unending oblivion, took care to inscribe here a detailed account of the various kinds of gifts and expenses that he had given for various works and ornaments to the honour of the house of God, .

Two pages of these 'gifts, and expenses' are detailed before the list of obits quoted earlier begins.

The only surviving manuscript is not an autograph, but a copy made by several hands. It ends with an entry for 1472 and Stone himself died in 1480. The manuscript is available to view online at the Parker Library of Corpus Christi College, Cambridge, and there is a complete published transcript dating from 1902, edited by G. W. Searle.

distinguished visitors

The ninety or so folios of the manuscript include a number of entries which have prompted the interest of historians of the 'Wars of the Roses', the vacillating fortunes of which continued throughout the last twenty years or so of Stone's life. There are various entries recording visits by King Henry VI to the monastery, on at least seven occasions up to 1455. For example, in 1439 (fol. 22a):

> Next in this year on the 14 March, that is the Saturday of the third week in Lent, King Henry VI came to Canterbury on foot for the purpose of pilgrimage and was received at the door of the church at twelve o'clock, after High Mass, by the venerable father the bishop of Salisbury and the prior, appropriately robed in red copes, with the response *Highest Trinity*. After the procession to the shrine, everyone hastened to Vespers and indeed after Vespers there was no procession in front of the cross.

Again, in 1440 (fol. 24b):

> On the fifth day of March this year, Saturday of the third week in Lent, King Henry VI, king of England, came to Canterbury on foot for the purpose of pilgrimage, and was received by the prior and convent, suitably robed in white copes at the door of the church, at the twelfth hour after Vespers, with the response *Honor virtus*. And when he had come to the high altar, he offered his great charter concerning a certain marsh in Thanet, near to the prior and convent's manor of Monkton.

A visit by the King or some other notable is slotted in between the largely formulaic obituary records of John Stone's brother monks. And just as Stone is concerned to record correctly the rites accorded to each deceased monk, his most obvious consideration when a dignitary comes visiting is to leave a note of what antiphons or anthems were sung, which coloured copes were worn, and what order of procession was followed. Such a visit will not itself be commemorated but there may be similar visits in the future, so these details of each visit are to be chronicled primarily as a precedent to be consulted by future monks who will thereby be informed of

what was customary or required on such an occasion. Normally, a royal visit seems to have had little other significance for John Stone and the individual monarch is mainly regarded as an instance of that type of figure for whom such and such a ritual might be appropriate.

There are, however, some entries of a different kind. For example, there is a five-line note for 1455, on folio 53b, which comprises a rather odd reference to what historians of the civil war now regard as the first battle of St. Albans:

> A Battle in the Town of St. Albans
>
> On the 22nd of May this year, in the octave of the Ascension, there was a battle in the town of St. Alban the Proto-Martyr, in the presence of King Henry VI and others lords, including dukes, earls, and barons. In which battle lord Edmund duke of Somerset, Henry earl of Northumberland, and Lord Clifford were killed.

Stone offers no gloss or explanation of who is fighting whom, or which side those killed were supporting, still less what was the issue being fought over 'in the presence of King Henry VI', itself a somewhat anodyne phrase.

Over the following twenty pages or so Stone then records, in his usual way, the deaths of over thirty brother monks, and a variety of other monastic incidents, covering a five-year period. There is then a somewhat enigmatic entry for 1460 (fol. 64b):

> Next in this year on 26th June there came towards Canterbury from Calais three earls, that is: lord Richard earl of Salisbury, lord Edward earl of March son of the duke of York, lord Richard earl of Warwick, lord of ffalconbridge, with a great multitude of people.
>
> And at that same time there were in Kent three renowned men of Kent sent to resist them by order of King Henry the Sixth, viz. Robert Horne of Appledore, John Scot, John ffoog. These three men left the city after Nones to meet the aforesaid earls at Saint Martin's near the city, and there negotiated with the earls for peace, and a concordat was reached, subject to conditions. And so they entered the city and went to the shrine of Saint Thomas, that is on the fifth feria.

We might today want to be told rather more details, and how politically significant, or perhaps historically important, that meeting on 26 June 1460, between those leaders of the Yorkist faction and Henry VI's representatives, was or might have been in the overall struggle for power between fiercely contending claimants for the thrones of England and France. But such issues do not seem to interest John Stone enough to investigate or explicate them. He merely records the occasion without any comment upon the 'conditional agreement'.

Then, beginning on the same folio, is a highly unusual entry which I will quote as printed in the 1902 edition since the mixture of English and Latin indicates that the source quoted here was perhaps transcribed from a newsletter of some sort written in English, and may be an insertion by a copyist. It's worth noting that the first names of the individuals mentioned in the entry were added by the 1902 editor, in square brackets, to fill in blanks in the text.

> vj^{o} idus Julii [July 10th] iuxta eandem villam [Northantoniam] erat bellum in campo,
> And for the feldys name of that oon parte on the northest syde it is callyd Cowemedewe. And that othir parte is I callyd Menthynfeld. And for the othir part is I callyd of tyme Sandyngford bregge nexte the towne. On the est syde there is a water melle is called Sandford melle.
> inter regem Henr' vj^{tum} Anglie et ffrancie et comitum Edwardum de Mares filium ducis Eboraci, et comitem Ric' Warwyk filium comitis Salysberie. In quo bello interfecti sunt dominus [Humphr.] dux de Bokyngham, comes Salopie, dominus [Johannes] de Bemond, dominus [Thomas] de Egyrmund, dominus Willelmus Lucy, dominus Thomas de Wernon, milites, et multi alii ex parte regis occisi sunt et submersi. Et ex parte comitum pauci erant interfecti.

The opening Latin sentence ('on the tenth day of July next to the town there was a battle in a field') is interrupted by the English passage and only completed by 'inter regem Henr' vj^{tum} Anglie et ffrancie et comitum Edwardum de Mares filium ducis Eboraci' – so we are finally told explicitly that there was a battle between Henry VI and the son of the Duke of York. In other words, that there was an ongoing conflict between Lancastrians and Yorkists. That the English paragraph occurs at the top of folio 65b, and awkwardly interrupts the Latin sentence, may indicate that this was an insertion, not by Stone himself, but by a later copyist of the manuscript, and that perhaps this whole entry is an addition. The concluding Latin sentence or so can be translated as:

> In which battle were killed . . [then the several lordly names] . . and many others on the king's side were killed and drowned. On the count's side a few were killed.

The manuscript soon continues offering further entries for 1460 with Stone's characteristic imperturbability (fol. 66a.b):

> Henry VI king of England
> On the 2nd day of the month of August, the lord king Henry VI of England and France came to Canterbury for the sake of pilgrimage and was welcomed by archbishop T[homas] B[ourchier] of Canterbury and

by the bishop of Ely, and by the prior of the church and by the whole community in green copes, singing the response *Highest Trinity*. Also on the same day various bishops came with the king, namely the bishops of London, Chichester, Exeter, that is the chancellor of England, the earl of March, the earl of Salisbury, earl Richard of Warwick. And the same day the lord king attended vespers, and the following day was in the procession. The community was not robed. The prior of this church celebrated high mass with his pastoral staff in the presence of the lord archbishop.
Note about the novices : Note, that the novices of this church received communion on the two Sundays at the high altar when they were at low mass in the presence of the king.
Next, on the [8th] of August there was a procession to the shrine and through the nave of the church and through the cloister and through the monks' cemetery, and so into the church. The lord king Henry VI of England took part in the procession.

Next on the vigil of the Assumption at the sermon in the chapter house there was the bishop of Chichester and he granted to all those who listened to the sermon 40 days of indulgence. Next, on the Vigil of the Assumption of the Blessed Mary at First Vespers, in the procession, at high mass, and at Second Vespers, the lord king Henry VI attended without his crown.

Next on the feast-day of Saint Agapatus Martyr the said king before Nones left Canterbury for London.

Though you may well not have noticed, that Henry is 'without his crown' (*non coronatus*) is the only hint that a war has been fought, won, and lost. Incidentally, Stone's Latin does not normally use initial capitals for titles, even for royalty, though I have used them to indicate the liturgical Hours.

Folio 67a calmly continues with the roll-call of obits I included earlier: the deaths of brothers William Coventry, Thomas Aldyntone, Willelmus Stokbery, Ricardus Borden – though we might now register with more attention the brief entry quoted earlier:

Next in this year on the feastday of St Edward king and martyr there was no procession inside the church, as the usual custom is on such principal feastdays, because of a procession for peace in the city.

The procession in the city did not bring peace. On the following page we find a 'Note on a battle near York' (fol 67b):

In the year of our Lord 1461 dominical letter D. there was a battle near York fought for the preservation and safe keeping of the illustrious and

excellent king and prince Edward IV for the right of his succession, with the duke of Norfolk and the earl of Warwick and the lord ffauconbridge, along with many more of the most accomplished men of arms in the king's realm and they were painfully put to the test at that place, namely the town of Sherborne and at the two well-known bridges there, against the previous king Henry VI, with others of his unlawful followers, fighting against almost all of the nobility and military from the northern parts.

We might simply not notice that the contending principals have now been transformed into 'the illustrious and excellent king and prince Edward IV' and 'the former king Henry VI', with his 'unlawful' followers, as if the chronicler had almost parenthetically switched allegiance. Even though at this date the 'former' king Henry VI was not, as yet, dead.

One might suspect that the wording of this entry was not from John Stone himself, though it was perhaps characteristic of him not simply to record the enormous number of the anonymous dead at the battle of Towton, as the text continues:

And there were killed, which we record with a sorrowful heart, twenty-three thousand men and even more, it is said, on Palm Sunday and the previous night, in the year of our Lord 1461. Whose souls may they rest with Christ for ever in peace. Amen.

The chronicle then proceeds steadily on, with its familiar liturgical concerns:

Next, in the same year on the last day but one of May, the Saturday in the Vigil of Holy Trinity, there came to Canterbury from overseas lord George and lord Richard sons of the duke of York and brothers of king Edward IV king of England and France, and they were received at the door of the church by the prior and the community wearing green copes, with the response *Highest Trinity*. And the same day they were at Vespers, and the following day they were in the procession, at high mass, and at Second Vespers.

The royal names have changed. The ritual continues. With the correct coloured copes and the same anthem as before. The coronation of Edward IV at Westminster is given only five lines, noting that the Christ Church prior did not attend. And then, just as before, a new Royal visit is recorded, with its requisite trappings, fitted as usual between the regular obits (fol. 69a):

Ricardus Barnys

Next in this year on the last day of April died Richard Barnes, brewer, freeman of the city of Canterbury, a true brother who donated to Christ Church Canterbury 8 marks, that is 5 marks to the work of the church,

20 shillings to the prior of the church, and 26s 8d to the community of the said church

King Edward IV

In the year of our Lord 1462 in the Octave of Epiphany came lord Edward IV king of England and France for the sake of pilgrimage, arriving at the fourth hour after Nones, and was received by archbishop Thomas Bowshir [Bourchier] and by the prior and community in the nave of the church with the response *Highest Trinity*, wearing red copes.

Brother Johannes Cauntirbery

Next in this year on the 12th day of the Kalends of March, that is the fifth feria in week 40 [*sic?*] died brother John Cauntirbery, monk priest and professed of the Christ Church Canterbury, at dawn; in the eighth hour after Vespers he had the commendation by the prior and community, and lay in the infirmary chapel with his face uncovered, and had fifty psalms in the choir; the following day he was buried, in his 22nd year as a monk. And the following day there were exequies in the choir for lord Thomas Arundell, archbishop of Canterbury.

So the entries record again that there is now another new king, and he pays a visit to Canterbury Christ Church, as was customary. What it is regarded as important to record about the visit is again not so much which king it is now, but which anthem was sung, what vestments were worn (red, not green, on this occasion), whether the pastoral staff was carried, whether the king attended Vespers. Such royal visits are, after all, almost literally those of kings who pass in the night, whereas the liturgical cycle proceeds according to firm precedent and continuing custom which it is the sober task of Brother John Stone to record. The fraternal deaths continue, as before.

There were further twists in the fortunes of kings, though we might need to pay close attention to register them in Stone's account. The fate of Henry VI in 1465 is recorded in a laconically concise series of entries (fol. 75b ff):

In the year of our lord 1465 on 12th July Thomas Bourchier archbishop of Canterbury came to Canterbury at the sixth hour after vespers, and he had no procession.

On the following day at the second hour before Vespers Edward IV king of England and France came to Canterbury and was received by the archbishop T.B. and by the prior and community in green copes, with the response *Highest Trinity* at the guest-house of the church.

Next, at the fourth hour later, that is before Vespers, Elizabeth queen of England arrived at Canterbury and was received just as the king was thus, but in white copes and with the response *Listen my daughter.*

> Next, on the same day and at the same time king Henry VI was taken prisoner in the county of Lancashire.
>
> Next, the following day the king and queen were in the procession, and the procession wore red copes and they processed as customary on principal feastdays. The archbishop celebrated high mass. The king and queen were at Second Vespers. After Vespers they went over to St Augustine's. The archbishop accompanied the king and queen with his cross held high before him.

That single inserted line saying that 'king Henry VI was taken prisoner' is the first indication so far that there has been a somewhat peculiar form of 'succession' involving two concurrent kings. The next entry continues:

> Next, on the Thursday following, about the twelfth hour, a certain monk came from the county of Lancashire with letters for king Edward, saying that king Henry VI had been captured, living with a few people of the county of Lancashire and was discovered. And immediately the archbishop of Canterbury had a sermon in the choir preached by a secular priest, whose text was: 'A man is made whole on the Sabbath'. After the sermon the archishop intoned the *Te Deum*. Then there was a procession to the shrine with the response *From the Highest*. The king and queen were in the choir for the sermon and joined the procession.

A further entry records in more detail the capture of Henry VI, but this account was written, as the manuscript notes, 'by another writer' (*per aliquid scriptorem*). There were to be further battles and more usurpations or resumptions of royal power, and even an entry recording the arrival in Canterbury of Edward IV in 1471 with 'it was said' 40,000 armed men (fol. 91b). Yet the continuing complicated contest between Henry VI and Edward IV is not coherently chronicled or even explicitly acknowledged.

Clearly, within Stone's text and the world of his monastic community the death of each individual brother is just as worthy of record as the slaughter of hundreds or even thousands in a war. Meanwhile, the doings and concerns of worldly 'great ones' are momentary and almost marginal by comparison with the perpetual remembrances of monastic ritual. So the latest King and Queen, whoever or whichever they now are, assume their temporary roles in the fractured succession and take their duly assigned places in the liturgical procession. And the life of the community proceeds, observing the correct rituals, with John Stone dutifully recording them for future reference.

The way in which matters are recorded by Stone means that any intrinsic distinction between a great personage and an ordinary monk seems implicitly disregarded, even as he registers differences of title, function, and status which might require a particular ceremonial recognition. This detached stance includes even his sense of himself as also merely one among many others. 'John Stone' does occasionally figure in his own chronicle, but only as another monk, another official with a function, as in this entry for 1457 (fol. 59a):

> Note concerning novices.
>
> Next this year on the feast of Saint Lucy the Virgin on Tuesday of the 3rd week of Advent, the following brothers were received into the religious life, namely: Reginald Goldstone, John Molond, Thomas Chartham, Richard Clement, Thomas Aldynton, William Egerton. The master of the Rule was brother John Stone of the first table, in his 40th year as a monk. These novices proceeded to the minor service on 12 February, to common service on 26th February, and on 21st April, that is on the feast of Saint Anselm archbishop of Canterbury, they were professed; the prior of this church celebrated the mass.

On another occasion, in 1461, he writes (fol. 68b):

> This year on the 10th July brother Henry Reculver was relieved of his office at the tomb of Saint Thomas the martyr. And the same day there was a nomination in the exchequer for one of the other offices there, and the third prior brother John Stone had the first vote on that other office, because the sub-prior Henry Barham was away.

We do, however, know a fair amount about John Stone.

Connor

It is time to note that, in addition to Searle's 1902 edition, Stone's work has been edited, selected, and translated by Meriel Connor and in the introduction to her *John Stone's Chronicle: Christchurch Priory, Canterbury, 1417 to 1472* she provides a summary of Stone's life and a concise account of the context of that life in the monastery of Christ Church during the fifteenth century. I have not so far referred to Connor's work but instead given references to the folios of the Corpus manuscript, and to Searle's 1902 edition. Connor's book was published by Medieval Institute Publications, Kalamazoo, in 2010, and is explicitly a 'selection' from Stone's text. It appeared in a 'Documents of Practice Series' which 'is designed to offer a focused collection of primary-source materials in a classroom-friendly format.' Connor included a complete English translation of Stone's text in her 2001 M.Phil. Dissertation for the University of London, and I am very

grateful to her for allowing me access to that thesis, though I have largely used my own translation of the text.

However, research dissertations are not regarded as 'classroom friendly'. The introduction, translation, and notes in the 2010 volume are excellent, but the 'selection' includes only about sixty percent of the whole of Stone's text. Given the nature of the series in which it was published, this was perhaps inevitable, but a comparison between Connor's selection and the complete manuscript or Searle's 1902 full transcript raises issues related to those I have been pondering.

There is no indication in Connor's translation of where omissions have occurred, and no cross-reference to Searle's edition, or to the pages of the manuscript itself. However, Connor provides a table which lists the names and dates of death in chronological order of all the Christ Church monks who are given obits in Stone's chronicle, which indicates that of the hundred and forty-four monks in the complete list more than seventy are not included in the selection as published in 2010. For each decade, fewer than half the monks who are recorded as having died in that decade are included.

From one perspective, this is perfectly understandable. It would be a brave teacher who would insist on students working their way through all 144 short obituaries. Even the dozen or so I have selectively quoted probably induced a degree of yawning in my reader. But the extensive omissions reshape the overall impression given of Stone's work. Entries concerning such events as royal visits and battles are mostly retained so that, given the excision of several score entries of a more mundane kind, those 'significant' events stand out much more prominently.

In commenting upon the *Anonymous Chronicle* I emphasised the extent to which ordinary soldiers were reduced to a kind of numerical anonymity. In John Stone's text each individual monk was, as it were, rescued by him from the oblivion of anonymity. Yet half of them are then, almost ironically, excised from this classroom-friendly primary source, and even more from my own account. One might regard those now omitted as occupying an even more ghostly existence than the rest of Stone's erstwhile fraternal companions. They have, despite a temporary reprieve, dropped out of the record. Again. Which raises more questions as to how we might think about and write 'history'.

differences

Let us step back a little. Overall, I suggest that John Stone's characteristic attitude and focus of attention is not a matter of provincial ignorance, or of not realising that visits by royalty or other high personages might be of 'historical' significance, and that he therefore had a duty to record them as of particular interest to future historians. Rather, what seems to be at work includes an element of indifference, which may be partly due to Stone's

relatively advanced age when he wrote the later entries and perhaps recompiled the earlier entries from contemporaneous notes. By 1467 he had, after all, seen a fair number of royal visits to his monastery, from as far back as the days of Henry V.

Canterbury lay on the direct route from Dover to London and was a regular stopping place for travellers of whatever status, including ambassadors, merchants, diplomats, soldiers, and a medley of continental pilgrims. Any Canterbury monk of any period would have been well aware of the continual traffic to and from the capital and the continent through the city, and the news and gossip which accompanied that traffic. John Stone was not uninformed, but there is a sense of him simply watching kings come and go, as they indeed did in those later years. After 1460 or so, one could almost ask on a weekly basis: who is the King today, Henry VI or Edward IV, or even perhaps Warwick? At one time, Warwick was plotting against the newly crowned Edward while the displaced Henry was still imprisoned. Did it fundamentally matter to John Stone who was King that particular week? Provided the correct anthem was sung.

Just as the really important point about the dead brother monks is their entry into another time, so the merely temporary passage of a king or two is less important than ensuring that the rituals of a brother's funeral or those of a royal visit be conducted in accordance with protocol and precedent. It is a profoundly different view of what matters from that of most historians today.

The tendency to think of 'history' as primarily what the 'great names' did is still deeply hard to resist. After all, those familiar terms, the 'Hundred Years War' and 'The Wars of the Roses', embed the conventional assumption that what characterises a period is the doings of the military and of the aristocratic classes. There is still a sense in which the concept of (contested) 'succession' underpins not only the modality but also much of the preferred content of 'history'.

At its most schoolroom-*un*-friendly, history, especially British mediaeval history, can be a matter of memorising a succession of royal names and the dates of reigns and battles, with an especially confusing repetition of names and titles for much of the period. How many Edwards and Henrys were there?

For John Stone, however, the records that matter are not those which support particular contested claims of succession, or inheritance, or royal territorial demands, whether overseas or in England, but those which bring to mind the death of each brother monk in the community which he had shared with them, so that they can all be 'remembered' to and by God.

Searle's 1902 edition of John Stone also included an attempt to compile from a variety of sources a list of Deans and Priors of Christ Church, with results very similar to the plaque now on the west wall of the nave. Searle provided a fragmentary list of the names of Canterbury monks from 830 to

1066 and then a further list from 1066 to 1534, using a miscellany of records. That list has since been greatly expanded by more recent research.

It was partly the patient work of monastic chroniclers such as John Stone which made possible Joan Greatrex's monumental *Biographical Register of the English Cathedral Priories of the Province of Canterbury, C. 1066 – 1540*, published in 1997. She writes (p. 50) concerning Canterbury:

> A rough estimate suggests that during the five centuries covered by this register about seventeen hundred and fifty monks would have been professed members of the Christchurch community. More than three quarters of this number are included in the entries below, which add up to a total of some fifteen hundred and fifteen names, the highest proportion of identified monks from any of the cathedral priories of the southern province.

Here, for example, is Greatrex's entry (p. 294) for William Stone, the first monk who figures in John Stone's text. It assembles all the references to William Stone in the extant manuscript records and printed sources (e.g CCA stands for Canterbury Cathedral Archives. I have expanded some of her abbreviations). It takes a little time to decipher.

William STONE: first mentioned 1367, died 1415.

1367, 11 Nov., one of nine process., *SL,* 182, CCA Lit. Ms D.12, fo 4v.
1368, 4 Mar., ordained acolyte., Canterbury cathedral, *Reg. abp Langham,* 387.
1369, 22 Dec., ordained as a Deacon, abp's chapel, Charing, Reg. abp Wittlesey, fo 165v.
1370, 21 Sept., ordained deacon, Saltwood, *ib,* fo 166v.
1371, 20 Dec., ordained priest, abp's chapel, Otford, *ib.,* fo 168.
1378/83*,* treasurer, CCA DCc MA2, fos 320-328, Treas. acct 26.
1383/4, 1385/6*,* warden of manors and treasurer, CCA DCc Meopham acct 98, MA2, fo 333, Lambeth Ms 243, fo 200v.
1389/91, treasurer, Lambeth Ms 243, fos 215, 217.
1391, June/1393, bartoner, CCA DCc, Bart. acct 65, Eastry acct 1I8, Monkton acct 103.
1396/7*,* anniversarian and bartoner, CCA DCc Prior acct 4.
1397/1402, anniversarian, CCA DCc Anniv. acct 7.
1399/1404*,* granator, CCA DCc Gran. accts 92, 95, Eastry acct 124, Prior acct 3, Eastry acct 127.
1403/4, anniversarian, CCA DCc Anniv. acct 23.
1404/7*,* 1415, before 12 Nov., granator, CCA DCc, Prior acct 20, Chartham acct 46, Gran. acct 93, *Chron. Stone,* 7.
1376/7*,* scholar at Canterbury college and received 66s. 8d. for his *capa scolastica* and for travelling expenses to Oxford, Pantin, *Cant. Call. Ox.,* iv, 187; for this reason he was absent from the abp's visitation on 2 Jan. 1377, Reg. abp Sudbury, fo 32.
1374, 30 June, 48th in order at the election of an abp, Reg. G, fos 173v-175v.

1377, 1 Jan., named on the visitation certificate as one of the five monks at Oxford, Reg. abp Sudbury, fo 32.
1381, 31 July, 36th at the election of an abp, *ib.,* fo 225v.
1391, Jan., with William Milton, *q.v.*, took the news of the death of prior John Fynch, *q.v.*, to the abp, Reg. abp Courtenay, i, fo 336v.
1396, 7 Aug., 18th at the election of an abp, Reg. G, fa 235v.
1411/2, the chamberlain spent 11d. in cloth *pro habitu W Ston',* CCA DCc Chamb. acct 71.
1415, 12 Nov., died, and was buried in the crypt before the altar of St Catherine and St Mary Magdalen; he was described by John Stone as 'vir decentissimus et magne stature inter omnes quos nostris temporibus vidimus', *Chron. Stone,* 7.

Thus is a life summed up. The next complete entry, another 'William Stone', has only a single line:

1485, 24 Sept., ordained subdeacon, Canterbury cathedral, *Reg. abp Bourgchier.*

Greatrex cites as a predecessor E. H. Pearce's biographical register of the monks of Westminster, published in 1916, and his preface begins (my italics):

> An effort has been made in this volume to *re-people* the Convent of St Peter, Westminster, by such an examination of the records as would enable me to cite the authorities for each name included and for each statement about the bearer of the name . . though much more may yet be done to *make the personalities of some of them a living reality* to our generation by means of the documents which survive from their time. . . the daily existence of the Abbey depended on the Prior and his Brethren. It was time, therefore, that these should be *brought out of the shadow-land* in which they have been allowed to remain.

The preface ends:

> For myself, I can only say that, with these names and these administrative careers before my mind, I find the mediaeval Abbey no longer *ghostly and unreal*, but flushed with all the signs of a vigorous circulation. I feel a genuine sympathy with Thomas Elfrede who was professed as a monk here under Henry VII's Abbot and died a Prebendary under Edward VI's Dean; and who, when his will was proved, was found to have left directions that he should be buried in some spot which in his youth he had passed daily, as he and his Brethren went their processional round of prayer and praise.

Elsewhere, Pearce remarks:

> Apart, then, from these three lists, containing in all about seventy-five different names spread over the long period A.D. 1000-1540, we have been left hitherto to the task of *re-peopling* our buildings with stray personalities discovered here or there.

Greatrex and Pearce both expressed the hope that their efforts would be expanded by others. And indeed there is now a flourishing journal entitled *Mediaeval Prosopography* and numerous publications and archival projects are devoted to tracing, listing, and 're-peopling'. As just one example, there is now a National War Museum website which is seeking to put on record at least the names of all those ordinary soldiers once merely enumerated. So far, there are over 250,000 entries on the database. There is room for many more in the digital data space, if not on a stone tablet in the nave. But this may be just another old use of a new technological capacity, rather than signalling a significant shift in how we think of history, or even of the 'Other Ranks'.

Despite all the extant records compiled by Greatrex, the details attached to the name of 'William Stone' do not bring him '*out of the shadow-land*'. Historians are familiar with a whole battery of lists of names, more or less annotated, to be found in various archives, repositories, and libraries. The provision of such lists of names, with varying arrays of biographical details, can be traced in England at least back to the Domesday book, including the *Domesday Monachorum* of Canterbury Christ Church itself. Or the records prompted by the *Statute of Additions* that anybody indicted should have the following details listed:

> By statute *1 Hen.5.c.5* all Indictments must set forth the christian name, surname and addition of the state and degree, mystery [trade], town, or place, and county of the offender; and all this to identify his *person*.

It is not a long step from that fifteenth-century Statute to modern court and criminal and other records now held in extraordinary numbers by police forces around the world. Parish registers of births, deaths and marriages, legal documents, and, perhaps above all, tax records can provide us with names. Most often the names listed are of those with some status in the community, such as lists of the mayors, sheriffs, and bailiffs of London to be found in the fifteenth-century *London Chronicle*. Most recently, of course, there is the accumulation and retention of enormous quantities of personal data digitally generated and harvested by social media organisations and surveillance apparatuses, such as Facebook, Google, and undoubtedly also MI5 and the National Security Agency.

My interest, however, is not that of a working historian consulting Greatrex's register or burrowing into national archives to locate a particular individual, but rather with how we think of history, including the difference between those who are named and those who remain anonymous,

recognising that the mere recording of a name may be only a label for someone effectively unknown.

In MS. 448 in the Lambeth Palace Library, probably written in the monastery of Ely, the list of those killed at the battle of Towton is inaccurate in naming the nobility who allegedly died in combat, but it is also variously stated that '28,000 corpses had been numbered upon the field by the heralds', and that it was '33,000 and more' (*quasi xxxiij milia et plures*), and also that the number of the slain 'was reckoned at 35,091, as it was reported' (*per aestimation xxxvM^{l}.iiij^{xx} et xj, ut dicebatur*). As with Thomas Becket's *ipsissima verba* we have a choice to make. But even if we recall the Polish poems quoted earlier, our reaction to the most exact number given here is likely to be scepticism as to its accuracy. In any case, does the '091' make a difference to us when we don't know who the final '1' was?

To take another example: the attempt in the *Anonymous Chronicle* to tabulate the number of those who died of the plague yields no specified individuals and only a handful of names appear in John Stone's text when he notes which monks died of the plague. Yet on some estimates between fifty percent and eight in every ten people in the population died in the fourteenth-century outbreaks. For the 1564 London plague a manuscript used by the Elizabethan antiquarian John Stowe was able to provide a running weekly total, but in the following list, for example, what is the difference for us between a week for which no cases are recorded and an entry which records that 'one' died of the plague – when we have no idea who that one was.

Unto y^{e} 28 of Septem. none.
Unto y^{e} 5 of October, none.
Unto y^{e} 12 of October, none.
Unto y^{e} 19 of October, none.
Unto y^{e} 26 of October, none.
Unto y^{e} 2 of November, none.
Unto y^{e} 9 of November, none.
Unto y^{e} 16 of November, none.
Unto y^{e} 23 of November, none.
Unto y^{e} 30 of November, none.
Unto y^{e} 7 of December, none.
Unto y^{e} 14 of December, none.
Unto y^{e} 21 of December, none.
Unto y^{e} 28 of December, none.
Unto y^{e} 4 of January, one.
Unto y^{e} 11 of January, none.
Unto y^{e} 18 of January, none.
Unto y^{e} 25 of January, none.
Unto y^{e} 1 of February, one.
Unto y^{e} 8 of February, none....

The compiler was presumably not responding simply as a statistician, if only because he too was in danger from London's recurrent plagues. Yet clearly he was not recording these deaths with the same kind or degree of personal interest or acquaintance as those which Stone records of his brethren, or even when Stone (or his copyist) adds to the number of casualties at the battle of Towton the remark : *Whose souls may they rest with Christ for ever in peace. Amen.*

In any response to the question I am probing is a residual element of the fundamental rationale for the monuments in the nave: the once widely-held belief that each of these individuals had, in some sense, a unique 'soul' and that their death, their disappearance into the anonymity or otherwise of the historical record, was not – and even is still not – their whole story. At some level, we somehow want to believe that we might know more about them. Those whose 'great deeds' are celebrated have some kind of after-life in historical secular terms, as do even those minimally named among the otherwise unknown. Yet insofar as that concept of an individual 'soul' for each and every one of us has been in various ways eroded, we might tentatively explore what has taken its place.

As I was writing this, the current number of those who had so far died in the Coronavirus 2020 pandemic in the USA alone stood at over 220,000.

ordinary

Let me return to the anonymous Canterbury chronicler. Even Anon does actually list the names of some ordinary victims on one occasion, in the account of a raid on Winchelsea in 1360. But the context shows that this is a polemical ploy, to emphasise that the despicable and cowardly French even slaughter non-combatants:

> While the king of England remained thus in France, certain Frenchmen, namely Lord John of Neuville, the constable of France, the Lord of Fiennes, Lord Hugh Chastelain, Lord Henry de May, Lord Pippin des Essars, Lord Rifflard, bastard of Flanders, and Lord de Cay, with forty knights and a total of six thousand men-at-arms, secretly landing with a fleet of thirty-six ships and small boats at Winchelsea on the Sunday in mid-Lent, that is the fifteenth of March, around the hour of noon on the same day, and traversing a marsh called the (R)other in the parish of Pett, two miles and more from Winchelsea, then passing between two hills called Hochknock and through the town of Icklesham, descended in arms and with hostile intent in three battle lines upon the town of Winchelsea ...

Thus far we have had a familiar list of knights and nobles. But the text then continues:.

> . . and cruelly put to death all of those whom they could, the names of whom are as follows:
> John Finch, merchant, John Dyer, draper, Robert Wickham, esquire, John Warren, draper, John Ewell, draper, John Rode, baker, John Gibb, tanner, Henry Finch, merchant, Henry de Feld, cobbler, Robert Smith of Tad', Thomas Stead, butcher, Stephen Storfast, barber, John Goudhurst, cobbler, Thomas atte Fontes Margery his wife, Philip the barber, Peter Glover, fisherman, Lord Robert Brember, the rector of the church of St Giles in the town of Winchelsea.

This list of individual names soon however stops:

> And in addition an estimated 120 more were killed there at that time. And for the whole of that Sunday the said Frenchmen remained in Winchelsea, plundering and burning and doing whatever harm they could, ravishing women, and eating meat regardless of the fact that it was Lent.

I rather like the rhetorical implication that the worst crime in this crescendo of turpitude is an action worse even than murder and rape: that of eating meat in Lent. But the list indicates that it was not always impossible to record the names of ordinary citizens – when it served propaganda purposes. Although the French soldiers involved remain merely 'six thousand men-at-arms'.

Elsewhere, Anon offers an example of an ordinary but named individual being thrust into fifteen minutes of fame. On a day of jousting contests in January 1361/2 (#89):

> A certain Brother John de Sutton of the London convent of the order of hermits, a strong man, went to close their doors there, and a powerful and violent gust of wind picked him up off the ground and hurled him through the middle of one of the windows into their garden, where – through the agency of an evil spirit, so it is believed – he was eventually left, without having been injured; and many other extraordinary accidents are said to have happened at that time, in London and elsewhere; and the houses and buildings which were thus destroyed by this wind remained ruined and unrepaired because of the lack of workmen. Behold the wretched omens of these jousts, the harbingers of future evils!

This small recorded incident is not, however, offered as a sensational 'human interest' or 'celebrity' story typical of today's tabloids, but as an omen, a signal, even a miracle, perhaps a warning of even stranger events to come. More like John Stone taking note of an earthquake.

At times, the *Anonymous Chronicle* records the impact not of war but of plague, bringing with it almost unimaginable numbers of the dead:

> In the year of Our Lord 1348, shortly after the death of John, Archbishop of Canterbury, a plague and mortality of men broke out throughout England to such an extent that scarcely one-fifth of those men who were living remained alive, and there was such a scarcity of priests and other servants that many churches were left unserved, and those who remained alive were utterly deprived of servants and labourers, as a result of which lands for the most part remained untilled everywhere.

Characteristically perhaps, Anon seems to regard 'servants and labourers' as not themselves among 'those who remained alive'. The difficulty, as always, is to register that each corpse was once just as alive as any other, or as the one fifth who remained alive, or as ourselves. John Stone also records regular pestilence or plague deaths, in 1419, 1420, 1432, 1457, 1465, 1467. He names each one in the community who died.

It has sometimes been argued that it was the economic impact of the devastating number of those who died in the plague which began to transform social relations in feudal England. Which eventually included the gradual erosion of the accepted special status of a mere handful of aristocratic families and titled individuals, and the emergence onto the historical scene of those previously dismissed as merely anonymous numbers. No longer as simply an army or a mob.

extra-ordinary

We can consider another list of names. The Anonymous chronicle duly presents us with the names of individual great ones and the numbers of the un-named thousands who set off on expeditions into France in 1346 and subsequent campaigns. Most of the lordly names mentioned in those lists are now known only to specialists in the period, and each requires a footnote in a scholarly edition. Yet one of the numerous foot soldiers on one of those campaigns is now among the most recognisable of all English names. A list of those in the 1359-60 campaign occurs in an accounting document, which shows that it was indeed possible, when regarded as necessary, to keep such lists: *Book of the Particulars of the Account of William de Farley, Keeper of the Wardrobe of the King's Household, for Receipts, Liveries, and Expenses, from 3 November 33 Edward III (1359), to 7 November, 34 Edward III (1360) 1 (rll), I.* Buried in page after page of lists is a perhaps recognisable name:

> . . . John Parker, *valettus* of Queen Isabella
> John Noble
> Sir Wm. de Graunson, knt. of Burgundy

John de York, king's carter and his 7 fellows
Ric. de Barton and Wm. de Pull, purveyors of poultry
John de Champain, chaplain
Galfrido Chaucer
John Horwood and Thos. de Chester *garciones*
Wm. Edward, the king's palfreyman,
Walter Courrermour,
Wlm. Forgere and Robt. Moss, archers. . . .

'Galfrido Chaucer' survived the 1359 campaign and was later to write the *Canterbury Tales*, with ordinary enough people telling tales of their own kind. As a result, the name 'Geoffrey Chaucer' is now known to far more people than have ever heard of most of the aristocratic 'great names' of his time. Fortunately, not least for Canterbury tourism, the list cited above is not of the battlefield dead but of those ransomed from captivity.

The concept of 'succession' is at the basis both of ways of writing history which foreground the role of 'great' men (and very occasionally women) and also of the actual political and social practices which give that mode of narrative a kind of credibility. Above all, the assumption almost literally embedded in the emphasis on royal and aristocratic 'succession' is that some people are 'naturally', by birth, intrinsically different and 'special' compared with the rest of us. The achievement of Chaucer as a writer of literary tales is not explicable by any such claims of inherited social hierarchy, even though some would still insist that 'William Shakespeare' can only be a pseudo-name for a suitably lordly personage. We don't know how someone becomes a 'great' writer. As Sartre once remarked: Flaubert was a petty-bourgeois, but not every petty-bourgeois was a Flaubert.

Moreover, a distinction between the great and the ordinary may not be reliable, if only because fame and reputation are unpredictable and status is comperative. In any case, paradoxes lurk in the very distinction between 'great' and 'ordinary', raising issues of choice and chance, of causality and accidents, of context and conditions. There is an inescapable oddity behind the notion of 'special' or 'great', since any such attributed status is inevitably a matter of relative scale and scope. A competitive striving to become the greatest, to achieve some special individual ranking, whether on the battle field or in a Presidential 'race', leaves open the possibility that you may be regarded by 'history' as simply another spear-carrier, even if the 'spear' was the entire US military apparatus. There were at least eight King Henries, after all, numbered successively. How many Pharoahs were there? And even the title of the archetype, Alexander 'the Great', looks a little over-stated once we can look down upon the extent of his 'world-wide' empire from a satellite.

There is also sheer contingency. Like those soldiers anonymously listed on the nave memorials or enumerated in Anon's chronicle, Geoffrey Chaucer could have been killed instead of captured. Even if, like

Archbishop Henry Chichele, we anticipate the design of our own tomb, death itself is a hard card to predict, and with it 'succession', the opportunity within a particular social formation to become one of the 'great ones' of 'history'. Edward III's son died 'prematurely', and so never became king, remaining eternally marooned in historical memory as merely 'Prince'. Most people admiring his tomb in Canterbury Cathedral know only his nick-name, 'Black'. And so his eldest son unexpectedly succeeded as Richard II, only to be shoved aside by Bolingbroke. And when Henry V died his young widow married a 'nobody', Owen Tudor, yet Henry VII derives his convoluted eventual succession from that same 'obscure' Owen Tudor. When Henry VII's Prince Arthur died unexpectedly, the younger Henry succeeded as the eighth Henry. And so on.

We are back at Prince Arthur's commemorative gate at Christ Church, still welcoming global tourists who have never heard of him. Chaucer's pilgrims were travelling to visit Becket's shrine, perhaps even hoping for some kind of miracle. If a miracle had occurred they might even have had their individual tale inscribed in the ongoing Christ Church compilation of miracles. It was one unexpected after-effect of the death of Becket that some very ordinary people were entered by name into the historical record. There are over 400 pages of ordinary miracle stories in the voluminous *Materials for the History of Archbishop Thomas Becket*. The most interesting recent literary work prompted by Chaucer is the anthology series *Refugee Tales*, in which ordinary refugees and migrants tell their personal tales to professional writers, whose versions are then performed on a kind of political pilgrimage, a protest march to immigrant detention centres – though it might take a kind of miracle to change some deep-seated opinions about immigrants.

It would indeed have been a miracle if any of Chaucer's pilgrims had actually been cured. Since they didn't exist. From Chaucer's fictional tales we can trace a development to the common-place heroes of later novels, for example, Graham Swift's *Last Orders*, in which a an ordinary dead bloke's ashes are taken on a journey to visit a war memorial and then to Canterbury cathedral, where his mates pause to contemplate the tombs. After all, 'what happened' in history has undoubtedly also included what was only imagined as happening. Had Chaucer's imagined pilgrims made it to Canterbury they would not have seen today's nave. Only two towers and a Norman floor. Being rebuilt. A largely empty space. Except for the anonymous builders.

Shakespeare aside

Allow me, as a deserved refreshment break, bring William Shakespeare as well as Chaucer into this ambling tale. Even though it might have been more locally patriotic to invoke Canterbury's own Marlowe instead. In 1450

John Stone recorded an unusual occurrence, perhaps as a grim sign of the times to come, the actions of a local rebel (fol. 42a – dates modernised):

Jacke Cade

Next this year on 3rd June, on the vigil of Corpus Christi, a certain unknown man [*quidam homo ignotus*] rebelled in Kent who called himself John Mortimer. And on 8th June, he came near to Canterbury with 4,000 men in a great camp between the church of St. Michael at Harbledown and the church of St. Dunstan. They waited for three hours, and then he departed for the area of Blackheath, and there he waited.

William Ayscough, Bishop of Salisbury

On 29th June following, master William Ayscough, bishop of Salisbury, was killed close to Edington in the diocese of Salisbury in the county of Wiltshire.

Then on 3rd July following, the aforesaid captain entered the city of London and accepted the keys to the gates of the city.

The following day, there were beheaded lord James Fiennes, lord Saye, knight, and . . Crowmer, sheriff of Kent, and the clerk of the said sheriff, and another, in the street called Cheap.

Matthew Gough

And the following day, outside the walls of London, there was a battle, and Matthew Gough was killed.

Next, on 12th July, the aforesaid captain was killed in the county of Sussex, in the parish of Heathfield.

Meriel Connor provides clarifications of the events which Stone is here succinctly recording: how the rebellion might have been related to the murder of Suffolk, that Ayscough was the king's confessor, who Gough was, and so on. What particularly interests me is Stone's phrase *quidam homo ignotus*. The term *ignotus* literally means 'unknown' but has connotations of vulgar, base, low-born, and indeed indicates someone with no name, an anonymous. We still don't know the real name of 'John Cade', 'the aforesaid captain'. But we might perhaps remember that we have seen him, on stage, in Shakespeare's *Henry VI, Part II,* Act 4, scene 2:

Drum. Enter Cade, Dick the Butcher, Smith the Weaver, and a Sawyer, with infinite numbers.

Cade: We John Cade, so termed of our supposed father—

Dick: *[Aside]* Or rather, of stealing a cade of herrings.

Cade: For our enemies shall fall before us, inspired with the spirit of putting down kings and princes. Command silence.

Dick: Silence!

Cade: My father was a Mortimer, —

Dick: *[Aside]* He was an honest man, and a good bricklayer.

Cade: My mother a Plantagenet —

Dick: *[Aside]* I knew her well; she was a midwife.

Cade: My wife descended of the Lacies —

Dick: *[Aside]* She was, indeed, a pedlar's daughter, and sold many laces.

Smith: *[Aside]* But now of late, not able to travel with her furred pack, she washes bucks here at home.

Cade: Therefore am I of an honourable house.

Dick: *[Aside]* Ay, by my faith, the field is honourable; and there was he borne, under a hedge, for his father had never a house but the cage.

Clearly, the dialogue mocks Jack Cade's use of the 'noble' name Mortimer and his claims to 'honourable' lineage. The core assumption of a social order is both appealed to and undermined: that some individuals are, simply by virtue of birth, more 'honourable' than the rest. The mockery is double-edged since we can see the scene as one of several in which Shakespeare deliberately parodies, by a kind of parallel inversion, the activities and preoccupations of the ruling elite. They are to be distinguished from the lower orders, as in the parodic performance in Falstaff's inn, mostly by their titles and dress rather than by any more fundamental human qualities.

Not entirely unlike John Stone's view of the matter, one might suggest, Shakespeare elides or undermines the ostensible differences between high and low. As with sumptuary laws or liturgical vestments, it is merely (stage) costumes which visibly highlight distinctions of social status, so a bit-part player can always exit as 'Messenger' and, with a swift change of apparel, reappear as a 'Lord' to 'swell a progress or two.'

The extensive doubling of parts in Elizabethan stage practice meant that audiences partly relied upon visual signs to identify and discriminate the roles being played by the same actor. The artificial scene in *Henry VI Part*

One, 2.4.30ff in which the opposing sides choose to wear contrasting white and red roses in their hats is a stage invention to enable the audience to discriminate thereafter between two similar groups of more or less arbitrarily contesting nobles, providing a more manageable device to enable identification than elaborate coats of arms or waving banners. The overall effect of Shakespeare's comic parallellings across class divides is to suggest a certain instability or levelling down in social distinctions and thereby at least an implicit questioning of the fundamental basis of the social and political order.

The chronicle of Anonymous of Canterbury began with succession claims and the waging of war, but the very fact that repeated mass military violence, in both overseas expeditions and civil war, was necessary to enforce those demands somewhat undermines their credibility as claims and certainly relativises their significance. There is a wry remark by a modern historian, Ralph Griffiths:

> Towards the end of the fifteenth century, French statesmen were noting with disapproval Englishmen's habit of deposing and murdering their kings and the children of kings (as happened in 1327, 1399, 1461, 1471, 1483, and 1485) with a regularity unmatched anywhere else in Western Europe.

This is precisely the sequence which Shakespeare undertook to dramatise when he started writing plays in the 1590s. His English 'history plays' cover the chain of fractured succession summarised by Griffiths and also covered by Anonymous and Stone taken together. Shakespeare's sequence of plays can be seen as representing dynastic 'succession' contests dramatically elevated into a national epic, with Henry V as the turning-point for English nationalist identification and Henry VII as the culmination of dynastic reconciliation.

At the same time, however, the plays' insistently staged brutalities bely all notions of 'nobility' and undercut rhetorical claims of 'honour' while the shifting allegiances and relentless carnage erode any confidence in legitimate 'succession'. The repeated combats can be seen as derived merely from squalid motives and petty personal rivalries. Redeploying his sources in the chronicles of Hall and Holinshed, Shakespeare both presents and questions conceptions concerning the various agents of 'history', whether kings, nations, armies, families, classes, or divine providence itself. Kings may be variously named as the lords of countries or regions, but it is a matter of brute power and sheer procreative chance how many titles and which territorial possessions a particular 'Lord' might accumulate or lay claim to, as the stage directions demonstrate with their constantly shifting titles for the entourages of the main protagonists. Shakespeare was further to undermine any unthinking acceptance of providential succession or the divine right of kings in both *Macbeth* and *King Lear*.

Almost as Milton's version of the Garden of Eden has replaced for many English readers the 'original' version in *Genesis*, so Shakespeare's reworking of Hall and Holinshed has resulted in a deeply influential redaction of the history of late mediaeval England. Any 'classroom-friendly' approach to that period through Shakespeare's history plays is likely to produce considerable and perhaps permanent confusion. For a start, anyone who reads Shakespeare's plays in the order in which they were written (and first experienced by an Elizabethan audience) might well be puzzled by a sequencing in which Henry VI precedes Henry IV and Henry V. Even when the plays are performed in the 'correct' chronological order, we can be very conscious of the extent to which Shakespeare drastically selects from his sources, manipulates, ignores, and misrepresents the sequence of events. Yet many of us have a far more vivid sense of Shakespeare's account of the period than we have obtained from reading 'history books'.

Shakespeare wryly acknowledges a difficulty in staging 'history' in the theatrical in-joke of the stage direction: Cade enters '*with infinite numbers*'. Clearly not. A few followers on stage will suffice, since the scene invites the entire audience to become participating extras, to join in the always-applauded cry "Let's kill all the lawyers" and "Burn all the records of the realm." Especially if John Cade is played by a popular comic such as Will Kempe, we are initially drawn into taking the part of the mob ourselves – until Cade's gratuitous violence chastens our identification. At 4. 2. 67 we are all to be apparelled in one livery. But then Cade knights himself.

The problem of putting a 'mob' on stage, as also in *Julius Caesar* and *Coriolanus*, is matched by that of staging an army. In the history plays Shakespeare is faithful to his sources in regularly reminding the audience of the numbers of troops involved in the battles he evokes – he explicitly mentions 25,000, 5,000, 30,000 – yet, apart from an 'alarum' or two, and some backstage trumpetings and shoutings, all he can actually provide on the stage itself is a somewhat slender muster of visible combatants. Necessarily, it seems, the physical limits of the theatre and the size of any affordable acting troupe must shape Shakespeare's dramatic mode to focus predominantly upon "great figures" so that the decisions and interactions of a mere handful of main protagonists construct the dramatic framework for the overall action.

Yet it is also central to Shakespeare's dramatic achievement that, as Molly Mahood has brilliantly demonstrated in her *Bit Parts in Shakespeare's Plays*, Shakespeare particularises and individualises all his ordinary actors on the stage of history, each given a decisive twist of singularity. In *Henry V*, for example, the minor role of ensign Williams is given a kind of parity with that of the disguised king himself (4.1), and each eventually displays a reciprocity of respect, a form of convergence between ranks which underpins the crucial patriotic unification of King and countrymen (4.8). Nevertheless, as the battle and play conclude, inbuilt divisions remain. The scene ends with Henry naming the many noble French among their 'ten

thousand' dead, contrasted with only four named English, a Duke, an Earl, a knight, an esquire, and 'None else of name; and of all other men /But five and twenty' (4.8).

That trademark individualisation of minor characters may be effected simply by an 'Aside', as in the John Cade scene, a device which can develop into a complex soliloquy. The audience not only see a living actor in the role but can eavesdrop on the character's audible inwardness. Some of Shakespeare's characters achieve such a palpable and believable reality that they can seem to have a life outside the limits of the play itself, as with Falstaff or Hamlet, thereby both prompting such inept questions as "how many children had Lady Macbeth?" but also inspiring Tom Stoppard's meta-theatrical *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead*. Yet despite the best efforts of the player in *Hamlet*, Shakespeare's living characters do not really die on stage. We know that they will return for the next performance, though the physical bodies of those who 'die' pose a stage management problem: how to get those inert objects off the stage.

To return to the formula of E. H. Pearce, in prefacing his Westminster Abbey register, Shakespeare does indeed "repeople" the period in the living performance of actors who realise physically on stage the characters his play-text has conjured from his sources. What we see before us, in performance, are living bodies im-personating these historical persons, and acting out, within the limits of stage time and space, the conversations, encounters, and even battles which Hall or Hollinshed recorded. Shakespeare provides more or less invented but compelling words for these living actors. Any alleged direct speech of Becket in his dying moments must remain wholly uncertain, whereas we are powerfully convinced by Shakespeare's speech-making, not only the public rhetoric of Richard II but the apparently private soliloquies of Prince Hal which persuasively take us into the interior discourse of a quasi-historical agent. Shakespeare's dramaturgical presentation, it seems, allows us to eavesdrop upon the self-addressed motives and mental processes of his characters.

The construction of believably 'living characters' might be pursued into the later development of the novel, with its written devices of first-person narrative and the complex interiorisations of Proust or Henry James, and further into the convincing representation of fictional characters on film and television, including the format of any popular series in which the same character has a kind of intermittent existence on a weekly basis, even outliving an occasional replacement by some alternative actor. A television Inspector Morse can even spawn his own earlier self while generating spin-off companions with their own series and ever more complex back-stories.

There is a difference between the phantom body of a vividly imagined fictional character in a novel, as we mentally envisage or imagine it, complete with his or her individualised subjectivity – and the actual living body of a Shakespeare character on stage, whose fluent soliloquies are nevertheless almost wholly determined by the text. In the case of characters

on stage or screen and in a novel we can feel emotionally moved by their fate or outcome – even while we remain relatively indifferent and unmoved by the constant news of global suffering. Again, Shakespeare has anticipated: what is Hecuba to thee, asks the Prince to the player in *Hamlet*. There is a sense in which the world has been increasingly populated not only by those who are alive, but by a 'ghostly' population that occupies an intermediate status between the living and the dead, not just the notorious un-dead of current horror movies, vampires and zombies, but also all those numerous fictional persons pursuing their imagined lives in our readings and spectating.

Before Shakespeare, of course, the 'Mystery' plays had put on a stage, however temporary, the 'characters' of the Bible story, as alive and speaking to us. An ardent reader of the Bible text alone could believe in their historical reality. The best-known stories, told throughout mediaeval Europe, included tall tales of numerous saints, whether in sermons or the *Golden Legend*, who comprised an entire population of named figures (after one of whom every child was supposed to be named) whose exploits and personalities convinced believers of their at least quasi-historical reality.

It was precisely to a category of these semi-phantom personages that prayers were addressed. Their status in relation to the mundane world was perhaps even less clear-cut than the character-realisations of strutting actors on the Elizabethan stage. And those for whom one prayed, through the intercession of those heavenly saints, had an even more peculiar ontological status in the half-world of the after-life – one which Shakespeare exploits in the opening scene of *Hamlet*, the ghost-father speaking from a realm which might be that of purgatory. In the same play Shakespeare intertwines Hamlet's convoluted soliloquy with the anxious question of how an afterlife might be imaginable.

Meanwhile, King Arthur, the Seven Champions of Christendom, Robin Hood, and Jack Cade himself entered into their own peculiar semi-historical quasi-fictional world, the precursors not only of their own later cinematic versions, but also the remote ancestors of Hollywood's multiplying super-heroes. The figure of Joan of Arc provided an intriguing transitional point where Shakespeare's counter-representation of the legend surrounding this historical individual almost coincides with the beginnings within Shakespeare's own lifetime of the erudite Bollandists' still-ongoing project to transform the lives of such saint-like figures of dubious historical actuality into well-researched and critically-sourced biographies.

However, modes of both historical record and fictional/dramatic invention are now entering into an intriguing new modality, with further problematic implications for how we believe in 'history'. The cinema industry can now readily 'resurrect' dead actors through combinations of VR and CGI to enable the digital insertion of pre-posthumous performances, suitably manipulated, into a current release film. Today's actors may well find themselves inhabiting the community of the dead and

no longer merely impersonating them. A cemetery epitaph might perhaps have once included a faded photograph of the deceased; soon it is quite likely to incorporate or be replaced by an interactive screen with networked links to the dead person's continuing though posthumous social media page. Hamlet Senior could now take advantage of a commercially available option: a hologram or VR visit from a deceased parent.

ignotus decentissimus

Our theatrical diversion is here ended. Yet the juxtaposition of Anonymous and John Stone suggests a further multi-faceted comparison. Much mediaeval thinking about society emphasised the distinction between three functions: to fight, to pray, to work. The distinct social responsibility of the warrior was to fight, that of the monk to pray, though the third function, of working or labouring, might be rhetorically assimilated to that of the monk (the claim that '*orare est laborare*' : to pray is to work) while the actual fighting was often done by ordinary agricultural workers recruited or cajoled.

One difference between a military and a monastic outlook is encapsulated in Stone's two terms, *ignotus* (used of Jack Cade) and *decentissimus* (referring to William Stone). The first denotes a society measured by hierarchy, the other describes people by their individual human quality. The focus of Anonymous is on the warrior, whereas John Stone implicitly appeals to the model of the saint. The point of fighting was sometimes to become the King, as Shakespeare's history plays grimly demonstrate, whereas the task of the monk was to become more saintly. One King excludes any other, as Edward IV excluded Henry VI and vice versa, but saintliness is intrinsically non-competitive since one saint does not preclude or exclude another, and anyone can at least attempt to become saintly. One Saint does not essentially out-rank another though stages or levels of saintliness might be progressively achieved, by spiritual progress within the monastic institution itself, or if necessary posthumously in purgatory, but it is an implicit challenge to the feudal order that any nobody can become a saint. Not least because the only ordinary human individual guaranteed by traditional Christian dogma to have attained a place in heaven was a woman, the Virgin Mary.

Both monastic and military male institutions might think of themselves as composed of brothers: brothers-in-arms and fraternal monks. The monastic rule included the daily recital of the names of their brotherly dead. Today there is a recital at 11 o'clock every morning in the cathedral of names from the Kent regiments' roll-call of dead soldiers. Like John Stone's text, that register constitutes a kind of paper cemetery. But there remains a difference. The attitude underpinning the distinction between officers and other ranks is fundamentally that some lives are more expendable than others, that some people are not worth as much as others, indeed that they are perhaps not even as alive as those above them – a viewpoint, commonly

articulated from the position of believing oneself to be one of those more alive. John Stone's treatment even of himself is combined with his levelling attitude towards kings and fellow monks equally. But the basis for that equality is a shared way of life (albeit itself selective) throughout fifty years, and is not quite an attitude of complete equality. All monks are obedient to their Rule and through that to the prior or abbot. But there is a form of mutual brotherly respect and an equivalence at least in death. Yet could that stance ever be extended to an entire social structure?

Henry VI or Edward the Confessor offered a kind of notional convergence of the two models, in so far as a Saint can be a King and vice versa, though it is less clear whether a saint should actually be a warrior, as in the problematic status of Joan of Arc. And problems can arise when a King is actually also a Saint: Henry VI was regarded as somewhat too saintly to be much of a warrior, and though the attempt was made to canonise him he was not deemed to be adequately responsible for enough posthumous miracles. Nevertheless, Henry VII optimistically constructed a Chapel in Westminster Abbey for Henry VI's future shrine – though as an insurance the royal tombs were also placed in close proximity to the one English King who was officially classified as a Saint, Edward the Confessor.

It had once been the privilege of a king, Henry IV, and a prince, the Black Prince, to be buried next to a Saint, as near as possible to Becket's shrine, a Royal option less available after the Reformation. Now, most English monarchs are discreetly buried in Frogmore, whereas burial in Westminster Abbey is reserved not for King or Saint but partly for that odd third category: the Great Writer. One might suggest that the demolition of Becket's shrine marks the moment at which a whole way of life and devotion was effectively erased, but thereby left a space for the emergence of a peculiar new criterion of human worth and a kind of immortality for which Chaucer and Shakespeare have both qualified. They are now canonised in a new sense.

That erasure of traditional saints also opened up a space which was eventually to be filled by a variety of self-declared 'Saints' who included would-be Levellers and later formed a New Model Army. Partly as a long-term after-effect of their exertions, many of us now pass by both the empty site of Becket's shrine and Henry IV's rather dismal tomb in the cathedral with a relative indifference to both criteria of worth, military and saintly. The long movement from Wat Tyler in 1381 and Jack Cade in 1450 through to the 1649 execution of a King means that we now have a merely constitutional monarch, a model which most ordinary people would be only too anxious not to find themselves born to become.

On the other hand, almost anybody nowadays can think of themselves as able to become a Chaucer or Shakespeare, at least to tell a tale or write a television script. In John Stone's case he too provided a model for the genre which almost anybody may now actually try to write. His memories of the hundred and forty or so monks who had died during his fifty years as their

brother constitute a kind of autobiography: this was his life told through their deaths.

time, again, & history

Let us return more directly to issues of time and history. In the Anonymous Chronicler's mode, history is presented as the passing of consecutive years, a succession of dates with events attached or attributed to those dates. If we ask 'what happened', and what caused it to happen, it can almost seem as if the cause was the passing of time itself, causality as a linear progression of successive occasions. Any elaborated narrative, however well researched or smoothly written, may seem not much more than a sequence of more extensively described chronicle-like happenings, as if, in Joyce's phrase, 'history was to blame'.

The several accounts of the death of Becket showed that narrative attempts to record 'what happened' inevitably involve uncertainties and gaps, however closely the attempt to zoom in on the events of a year, the daily detail, passing hour, or flickering minute. Trying to narrate the whole of 'what happened' is unavoidably asymptotic, since it is impossible to recount everything that happens, minute by minute, second by second. Even though it may now be possible, using various forms of digital audio-visual technology, to record a local and limited sequence of events, to take consecutive photos or produce a more less continuous digital video rcord, such efforts also have their limitations, of viewpoint, framing, and composition, despite the best efforts of today's comprehensive surveillance systems.

However, time may not necessarily be conceived of as linear and uni-directional, a sequential narrative of singular dates. Different conceptions of time are at work in these various Canterbury historians and chroniclers. We may think of 'natural time' as in some respects cyclical and repetitive, echoing or involving an agricultural rhythm of daily changes and seasonal renewals, of life and death alternating with each other, new life replacing old life, not so much a linear order as a form of repetitive exchange and substitution. As we glimpsed in relation to John Stone, the monastic liturgical rhythm of annual and daily repetition, with complex variations of anthem and vestment, text and commemoration, was in some respects a version of cyclical time. The original Benedictine Rule advocated actual participation in agricultural rhythms, and farm labour was often included within the pattern of early monastic life.

Living by the monastic Rule was an organised way of passing time until death, a suspension of mundane time and a partial anticipation of heavenly time, itself often envisaged as a version of the constant liturgical activity of musical worship, endlessly and joyously repeated in eternity. The monastic days and nights were taken up with a routine of time-filling engagements, each with its own temporal patterning. The several liturgical 'hours' shaped

the rhythmic construction of each day, both a punctuation of secular time, with its tasks and labours, and a pattern of moments which were evocative of the non-temporal. While chanting in the monastic choir, one was supposedly in the presence of the heavenly host or angelic choir. The specifically liturgical mode of time partly anticipated and partly exemplified a heavenly fullness of time. It entailed the daily subordination or sacrifice of normal forms of linear time in the faithful hope, and in the detailed actual practice, of constantly rehearsing an eventually full participation in a quite alternative mode of temporality.

The nearest we might now come to that kind of experience is probably during a long illness, especially in a hospital setting, involving the suspension of normal time and its replacement by an all-encompassing artificially regulated and locally cyclical time. We adjust to the temporality of the disease, the microbe, the fever, the body itself displacing our normal organisation of our own time. The illness seems to run at its own pace and we align with it, for the sake of a cure, by an abeyance of our normal activities and familiar temporal patterns, while those responsible for our care implement or impose a complex rhythm of repeated interruptions, often shaped as much by the hospital's institutional scheduling requirements as by our own medical needs. Even at home, or in a care home, the elderly may experience a variation of this temporal modality, with the overall tenor of their time implicitly shaped as a kind of waiting for death, since a complete cure for old age is inexorably out of the question.

It may be that 'natural' or agricultural time was itself not merely consonant with but partly encouraged its own version of this waiting attitude, not only that the seasons would inevitably return but that any fundamental transformation was to be passively anticipated as much as actively realised, while the agricultural cycle itself demanded almost incessant work. Such cyclical waiting could profoundly shape one's sense of life as a prelude to a hoped-for after-life. Insofar as the monastic experience of living was felt and conceptualised as a waiting for the true life to begin, in the after-life of heaven or hell, this mode of suspended time was already akin to that envisaged for the dead waiting in their tombs, their actual lives now over but their waiting still continuing. Indeed, the fully professed monk was sometimes legally classified as already dead, and some religious orders encouraged sleeping in one's coffin or shroud.

Thus, in John Stone's chronicle the fundamental time of both the living and the dead is that of liturgical remembrance and monastic rhythm. Individual monks' lives are even ranked according to the date of their profession as monks, so that seniority rests upon the internal temporal metrics of the monastery itself and not upon one's given or natural date of birth.

We can also see in Stone's chronicle the interaction or intersection between monastic and 'historical' time occurring almost literally as the entry of a different time into the domain of monastic time. The arrival of kings

and other notables into the precincts may be dated in calendar or historical time, though primarily to be recorded in liturgical time by John Stone. The most brutal and notorious intervention of historical time into monastic time was of course the irruption of the four knights into the cathedral itself and the murder of Becket, even as the daily rite of evening vespers began. That murderous event was then, however, marvellously followed by the intersection of heavenly time with mundane time, as the miracles attributed to Becket multiplied.

Chronological, chronicle, or historical time, has a certain consonance with familiar forms of writing, also to be found in Stone. History can be thought of as a matter of consecutive written entries, of numbered pages being turned, composing a time not of cyclical renewal and repetition but of succession or progression, a sequence of events or dates, of numbers regularly added, those of an ongoing calendar, the unstoppable and potentially endless march of days and weeks, months and years. A minor variation might be the marking of regnal years to register the time passed since the succession of a new monarch, whose death will in turn initiate a new numerical beginning, a new year-zero within the overall accretion of dates.

'Historical' time can be envisaged as a matter of projection as well as accumulation, as a time in which objectives and projects, ambitions and desires, might be progressively implemented, a time in which an expansion of power and dominion could be attempted and perhaps realised, a time for competitive struggle over what were perceived as scarce resources or assets, including the labour time of others. In particular, the specific forms of concentrated political and economic power in mediaeval Europe, largely based upon notions of family continuity and connection, of possession and inheritance, not least of agricultural land, almost necessarily involved an incessant jostling over issues of contested succession and entangled inheritance, an endless fluctuation of marital alliances and shifting kinship networks, and with them the retention or re-allocation of property and territorial rule. Yet the repetitiveness of these ever-renewed competitive struggles could almost transform linear succession into its own form of circular futility. The very notion of a 'dynasty' incorporated some conception of vicarious quasi-return, outlasting death in one's descendants, and having or endowing rights beyond the grave: the lord is dead, long live the lord.

This particular socio-economic formation not only contributed to a dominant notion of what would later mainly comprise a written history, a matter of tracing dynastic networks and recounting territorial conflicts. It has also shaped the very purposes of recording or archiving such a 'history'. Insofar as the ambitions and projects of dynastic agents rested upon or appealed to the alleged legitimation of their claims through kinship connections, especially those derived from legitimate birth and authorised marriage, the function of much written history and archival investigation

was to record, justify, examine, or refute, those claims and associations. An ancillary function was often to memorialise, in celebration and endorsement, the human attributes and activities which were seen as important in the pursuit of such contested dynastic continuities and disputed territorial ambitions. Thus, success in military conflicts could be characterised as endowing a protagonist with long-lasting 'glory' while reluctance to engage in dynastic expansion, or failure to prolong dynastic propagation, could be assessed as 'failure'. Such notions could easily be extrapolated to 'nations' as units or agencies not very different from dynasties, with a 'royal family' as the conjoining linchpin. Many of these motifs can be read in the memorial inscriptions we considered earlier. It is precisely these notions of history which have so deeply influenced the funerary furniture of the nave.

Insofar as this mode of history is allied to an underlying metaphor of a written narrative, we can also ask who the envisaged reader of the book of history might be. Over and above, quite literally in some conceptions, the aristocrats preoccupied with their ancestors and descendants, or the 'nation' concerned with its destiny, there was implicitly the divine reader who already, as it were, omnisciently knows the outcome of these entangled tales, has already read the unwritten pages, and has indeed already written them. Like most books, the history narrative concludes with 'The End', whether beneficially happy or apocalyptically catastrophic. Unlike most books, it can't be re-written or perhaps even re-read. As, currently, climate change is making clear.

inter-times

We might, however, try to envisage a mode of history as not governed by these familiar linear conceptions, but instead shaped as a combinatory of different times, or kinds of time, and their complex interrelations. An alternative mode might explore shifts in the dominance of one configuration of time over another, including uneven displacements of 'natural' time by 'historical' time. The later mediaeval period can readily be conceived without the traditional emphasis upon the conflicts, combats, and campaigns of competing warlords.

One approach regards the agricultural cycle of sowing and harvesting not primarily in its relationship to particular owners and transfers of ownership, and not simply in economic terms of changing systemic structures of labour and surplus, debt and obligation, forms of ownership and tenancy, or even of technological innovation. Instead, 'natural' time, as embedded and realised in agricultural land and labour, can be seen as the core component of an entire socio-economic and political system, as itself a dominant time structure. From that perspective, the struggles over the possession and expansion of specific land ownerships, the intermittent drives for territorial control, for the appropriation of more land, mainly by deploying the spare

capacity or surplus energy of those employed on the land to provide private or national armies, can be conceived not in terms of the fortunes of dynasties but as the crucial factor in gradually displacing agricultural land from its centrality as the framework of social time. The alienation of land ownership by monetary transactions displaced warrior appropriation, while the largely non-violent Henrican appropriation of monastic land, totalling perhaps a fifth of all English agricultural property, was a culmination and variation of this transformation. In addition, the increasing role and growth of cities was not only an economic and political change but also the expansion and consolidation of an alternative configuration of time, an urban temporality.

From a related angle, the interactions between 'historical' time and 'heavenly' time could be partly explored through the association between land-ownership and monastic poverty, regarded as a form of corporate ownership. One function of monastic celibacy was to distance the monastic 'brotherhood' from the normal competition of dynastic families. An individual monk's ambition or fortune could not be perpetuated though ongoing kinship inheritance, since there was no legitimate marital contract to validate parental asset transmission, such as the handing on of church benefices or ecclesiastical livings, although favourite 'nephews' could often be so favoured.

On the other hand, the monastic institution itself could be regarded as having a continuing and trans-generational existence, almost a quasi a-temporal continuity, as a corporate agent acting within historical time precisely by exploiting its financial ties to heavenly time, through its wealthy endowments in return for religious services. Natural time in the form of agricultural labour and communal ownership of land also still partly sustained monastic time, since monastic organisations always had a degree of motivation towards corporate expansion, involving a constant engagement in secular or historical time.

Thus, a pervasive set of relations between natural time, heavenly time, and historical time deeply shaped the monastic mode, and eventually that of the secular clergy and the devout laity. The very character of linear time or narrative may reinforce the notion that individual human life also proceeds in a linear fashion, a sequence of one event after another, until death finally and irresistibly marks an inevitable transition into some other form of modified but still consecutive temporality. Thus the ostensibly a-temporal realm of the after-life might be lucratively re-conceived as allowing forms of intervention from and into the ongoing historical trajectory, through prayer, penance, and even miraculous or providential intersections of the timeless with time. If human time was fundamentally envisaged as continuing into eternity and if individual agents within historical time saw themselves as destined to depart from that terrestrial time through unavoidable death, they could be induced to invest in an insurance policy for what came after, in the form of endowments or bequests to the monastic domain, whilst also

hoping that the divine was still prepared to intervene beneficially within historical time. Hence the belief in financing monks and priests to pray on behalf of a donor, dead or alive. How far such gifts and bequests reshaped the actual organisation of monastic time and space might, for example, be registered by the proliferation of side chapels and altars for chantry masses.

However, whereas the socio-economic basis of land ownership dovetailed with feudal military institutions was vulnerable to the commodification of land, the implicit competition over a finite amount of land to be shared or monopolised can be contrasted with the theoretically unlimited expansion of the alleged effects of paid prayer-time, in which we might even see the initial glimmerings of an infinitely malleable financial system, a form of ecclesiastical quantitative easing. After all, in a variation upon calibrating purgatorial time, how did one calculate the proper ratio between a given monetary sum and the rewards of eternity attributable to a monk's more or less arbitrarily timed devotions on one's behalf? In so far as prayer was the foundation of monastic prosperity its resources were, almost literally, infinite and might even be compared with the self-generating resources of a modern bank corporation able in effect to print its own money by lending notional sums in exchange for guaranteed future repayment.

We might further sketch these several complex interactions of natural, historical, and heavenly time, but also ask whether there is now emerging another new modality of time. If we can outline the shifting relations between previously dominant time structures, is it feasible to recognise a contemporary re-configuration of time, an emerging new time system, and therefore perhaps another way to envisage what we call history? We can return to these themes later, not least in relation to the monastic Treasury.

zoom

Let us for the moment reconsider the notion of 'zooming' which was briefly articulated in relation to the various lives of Becket and their different attempts to focus upon the minute details of one afternoon in 1170. In the limited time available for our own visit to the cathedral, we might attempt at first to go systematically down the nave aisles looking at each memorial in turn, but in practice we end up 'zooming in' on a few specific memorials. We pay more attention to this epitaph rather than to that effigy, as we abandon the notion of examining them all, perhaps because we can't read the Latin or because this image strikes us as simply more interesting than that inscription. But mainly because it would take us too much time. So instead, these days, we try almost to record time itself as we literally zoom in for close-ups and re-focus for long-range shots and panoramas. We take digital videos and photographs, record slices of time, which we might intend to look at again, at some other time. We might even think of ourselves as accumulating memories before we actually experience

them, even as we look quickly at the digital photo we have momentarily taken, partly in order to find out what it is that we have just seen.

There was once the notion that somehow the Recording Angel kept track of all our actions, thoughts, and motives, however fleeting, through a kind of omniscient heavenly surveillance program, and it was once a common religious practice to undertake a daily 'examination of conscience', an attempt to assess and judge every facet of our life each day, as if looking back upon the day's events to assess one's life in God's eyes. The private or even secret diary emerged to serve a perhaps even more narcissistic function.

There is a perhaps apocryphal story of a coach-load of tourists travelling in Europe who asked their tour guide to arrange each day so that in the morning they would visit various famous places and sights, during which they would record videos of themselves visiting those places. In the afternoon they would not visit anywhere new, but would assemble in the hotel lounge to show each other their videos from the morning's visits. Some uses of mobile phones offer an instant version of that mode of displaced timing.

Nevertheless, it remains dominantly the case that actual historical persons, including ourselves, are still primarily conceived to be operating within the framework of a passing but given historical moment into which they are placed, as if 'history' preceded them and they are inserted into its ongoing temporality. To conceive of an alternative model might be akin to putting on stage an infinite cast and constructing a quite different kind of stage in the process.

What if we seriously and systematically regarded history as itself constructed from those multitudes of the un-named, not simply in the sense that it was they who did most of the fighting and tilling, trading and praying, but also that it was each one's individual time which constituted them and which taken together in an ever-changing overlap and intersection of individual times constructed the 'periods' or 'stages' of that 'history' which, even in Shakespeare's plays, seem to provide the overarching temporal framework, rather than vice versa. What if we begin thinking about history not in terms of an overarching framework, let alone a dominant narrative, but primarily as the interaction of distinct times, not even of individuals or biographies, but at the most puzzling level the ways in which both the various times or tempos which constitute our very lives and also the different temporalities of the physical world itself shape and form each other. And that the specific time of every single individual is intrinsically constitutive of the history into which we think of ourselves as 'entering' and events as 'happening'. Rather, it is almost vice versa.

It is comparatively rare to see this motif even glimpsed. However, in *Unexpected Reunion*, one of Hebel's short stories, we can see something of such a reversal.

As Walter Benjamin's comments on death, time, and history make clear in his essay *The Storyteller*, contrasting the traditional storyteller with the novelist:

> Death is the sanction of everything the storyteller can recount. He has borrowed his authority from death. In other words, it is natural history to which his stories refer back. This is exemplified in one of the most beautiful stories we have from the incomparable Johann Peter Hebel. It is found in the *Schatzkaistlein des rheinischen Hausfreundes*, entitled 'Unexpected Reunion'. The story begins with the betrothal of a young lad who works in the mines of Falun. On the eve of his wedding, he dies a miner's death at the bottom of his tunnel. His bride remains faithful to him after his death, living long enough to become a wizened old woman. One day, a body is brought up from the abandoned tunnel, which, saturated with iron vitriol, has escaped decay. She recognizes her betrothed. After this reunion, she too is called away by death. When Hebel, in the course of this story, was faced with the necessity of making this long passage of years vivid, he did so with the following sentences:
>
> > 'In the meantime, the city of Lisbon was destroyed by an earthquake, the Seven Years' War came and went, and Emperor Francis I died, the Jesuit Order was abolished, and Poland was partitioned. Empress Maria Theresa died, and Struensee was executed. America became independent, and the united French and Spanish forces were unable to capture Gibraltar. The Turks locked up General Stein in the Veteraner Cave in Hungary, and Emperor Joseph also died. King Gustavus of Sweden conquered Russian Finland, and the French Revolution and the long war began, and Emperor Leopold II went to his grave as well. Napoleon captured Prussia, and the English bombarded Copenhagen, and the peasants sowed and harvested. The millers ground, the smiths hammered, and the miners dug for veins of ore in their underground workshops. But when in 1809, the miners at Falun…'
>
> Never has a storyteller embedded his report deeper in natural history than Hebel does in this chronology. Read it carefully: Death appears in it with the same regularity as the Grim Reaper does in the processions that pass around the cathedral clock at noon.
>
> (see Benjamin, *Illuminations*, 1970, p 94f, Paul translation.)

Shakespeare makes a related point in his own way. Mistress Quickly does not date an event by some public reference point or even according to the calendar but by a density of memories. When Falstaff indignantly demands **'**What is the gross sum that I owe thee?', she almost re-enacts the specific moment when the debt arose, not by invoking an impersonal legal date but in a flood of vivid recall:

> Marry, if thou wert an honest man, thyself and the money too. Thou didst swear to me upon a parcel-gilt goblet, sitting in my Dolphin chamber, at the round table, by a sea-coal fire, upon Wednesday in Wheeson week, when the Prince broke thy head for liking his father to a singing-man of Windsor—thou didst swear me then, as I was washing thy wound, to marry me and make me lady thy wife. Canst thou deny it? Did not goodwife Keech, the butcher's wife, come in then and call me gossip Quickly? coming in to borrow a mess of vinegar, telling us she had a good dish of prawns, whereby thou didst desire to eat some, whereby I told thee they were ill for a green wound? And didst thou not, when she was gone down stairs, desire me to be no more so familiarity with such poor people, saying that ere long they should call me 'Madam'? And didst thou not kiss me, and bid me fetch thee thirty shillings? I put thee now to thy book-oath. Deny it, if thou canst.
>
> (*Henry IV Part Two,* 2.1.86ff.)

Consider for a moment how the juxtaposition of these passages brings into interaction a palimpsest of several different registers of time and tempo, including those fictively constructed by Hebel and Shakespeare but also the moments of composition, including performance, from Elizabeth's London to Hitler's Germany, and references evoked from Henry IV's wars to the mines of Falun, as two complex quotations are plucked out of their previous contexts and contemplated together, as it were, in the quiet of today's cathedral nave.

This too is a form of writing of 'history', constructing a constellation, a configuration drawn from what we think of as the past, as several pasts, but inscribed in whatever is the here and now of your reading it, perhaps not unlike a photograph you have just taken of a memorial tablet in order to examine it more closely, later.

The Anonymous and John Stone have together taken up rather more of my time in the nave than I had anticipated. It is time to consider another Canterbury historian, and a different set of relations between death, history, and time.

GERVASE OF CANTERBURY

In 1926 Reginald Poole began his *Chronicles and Annals* by referring to what was already a well-known passage from the Canterbury monk Gervase:

> The distinction between [histories and chronicles] is well put by Gervase, a monk of Canterbury, who wrote at the end of the twelfth century. The Historian and the Chronicler, he says, have the same intention and use the same materials, but their manner of treatment is different and their form unlike. For the Historian proceeds in an ample

> and elegant style, whereas the Chronicler writes simply and with brevity. The Historian aims at relating facts as they really happened, but he does this in a literary form; he pleases his readers by the gracefulness with which he describes men and manners. The Chronicler, on the other hand, sets down the Years of Grace, calculates the months and days, notes shortly the doings of kings and princes, and records events, portents, or miracles.

The distinction itself is interesting, but I particularly want to notice Poole's own practice here: a familiar device of historians and other scholars. His account paraphrases or summarises Gervase, rather than directly quoting him. A quotation embeds part of a previous text into one's own, whereas a summary reduces the length of the original at the expense of selective compression. A text which simply quoted or incorporated the whole of a previous text would now strike us as odd, perhaps as plagiarising. Yet that was the procedure often followed by historians at the time of Gervase. I want to think further about ways of actually composing a written history, using Gervase's work to provide examples.

All we basically know about Gervase himself is that he was professed as a monk of Christ Church by Thomas Becket in 1162, became the sacrist of the monastery, and died probably around 1210. Gervase's works were edited by William Stubbs in two substantial volumes in the 19th century Rolls Series. I can indicate one issue I want to explore by simply comparing the page-count for two of Gervase's texts in that edition, as a way of highlighting an aspect of the writing of history which we tend almost to take for granted: the variable relation between the length of a text and the time covered.

Gervase is named as the author of a *Chronica Minora*, or *Smaller Chronicle*, also entitled *Acta Regum*, or *Acts of the Kings*. Overall, the *Smaller Chronicle* covers British history from the legendary arrival of Brutus up to the year 1328 A.D. Gervase's own contribution to compiling the *Smaller Chronicle* comprises just over 100 pages and ended by 1210 when he died. Other Canterbury writers took over and continued the chronicle in several stages, concluding in 1328. The whole text takes up about 320 printed pages of the second Rolls volume. Gervase also composed a *Chronica Maior*, or *Large Chronicle*, which begins in 1100 A.D., with the accession of King Henry I, on page 91 of the first Rolls volume (after some short texts I will consider later), and it finishes on page 594 with the death of Richard I in 1199. So, the century from 1100 to 1199 takes almost 500 pages. More precisely, Henry I's reign is given in very summary form over the first few pages and the rest of the *Major Chronicle* is then arranged according to the succession of years, with the various events of a particular year grouped under each date. In effect, a total of just 63 years takes up most of the 500 pages.

In the *Smaller Chronicle* the treatment of that same century, from 1100 to 1199, occupies only twenty-three pages and is largely an abridgement of

Gervase's own account in the *Major Chronicle*. The text is organised not according to years but to reigns, and those 20-odd pages cover Henry I (four pages), Stephen (five pages), the reign of Henry II (eight pages), and that of Richard I (six pages).

The *Major Chronicle* gives detailed accounts of various battles and campaigns in the civil war between Stephen and Matilda, taking up dozens of pages. In the *Smaller Chronicle* military matters are largely reduced to a few brief and vague phrases ('and evils were multiplied in the land', 'there were numerous evil actions made against each other') with just a few of the major encounters given a sentence or two. For the reign of Henry II, what loomed large in the *Major Chronicle* is, as we might expect, the long dispute between Henry and Thomas Becket, recounted in detail over nearly seventy pages, but in the *Smaller Chronicle* Becket's martyrdom is almost just a subordinate clause in a single sentence (II, p. 79):

> However, the king, having appointed deputies to watch over the young king, came down to the sea and crossed over to hold a conference with the king of the French, where, thanks to the prayers of the king of France, he took back into his grace the archbishop Thomas, and sent him back to England. Where in this church of Canterbury he was gloriously crowned a martyr, and then thanks to both the infamy of that death and to the many miracles of the saint, the king became deeply concerned and commanded that no clergyman or man of letters should come close to him, and if anyone brought into the kingdom the decree of interdiction issued by the lord pope, that person would be taken and be put in jail.

In the *Major Chronicle,* the years after Becket's death are almost entirely devoted to an extraordinarily convoluted account of long drawn-out disputes between the monks of Canterbury and Archbishop Baldwin. As well as a quarrel with Saint Augustine's Abbey, Baldwin had allegedly planned to displace the Christ Church monks from their traditional role in electing the Archbishop of Canterbury by transferring that privilege away from the monastic cathedral to a new College of secular canons located at Harbledown, a small village a few miles outside Canterbury. The *Major Chronicle* narrates the complicated twists and turns in a conflict involving not just the monks and the Archbishop, but King Henry, several popes, and various papal legates. The text incorporates extensive quotations of legal decisions, edicts, and official letters. The quarrels began shortly after a disputed election process in which Baldwin had been declared Archbishop in December 1184 and the bitterly entangled issues are still unresolved after 350 pages of mind-numbingly detailed narrative during which almost all other events in the reign of Henry are given only very cursory treatment.

Moreover, in two of the three extant manuscripts of the *Major Chronicle*, the Chronicle itself is preceded by several short texts also concerned with

the Baldwin quarrel, entitled *Imaginationes* and taking up a further thirty pages or so. These 'imaginations' are speeches both for and against Baldwin's policies, but seem to have been composed by Gervase himself, perhaps as rhetorical exercises, or possibly as some kind of draft for actual negotiations between the monks and Baldwin. Various forms of documentation are also included with the *Imaginationes*, as evidence to support the opposing arguments. Thus, a total of some 400 pages in this thick volume are devoted to this single contest.

Yet in the *Minor Chronicle* the entire quarrel with Baldwin is only referred to in just two short and separate sentences:

> How many and what highly grievous troubles affected the community at the election of the two archbishops, Richard and Baldwin, or how many assaults and spoliations of all things the same Baldwin made against the community, it would be an indulgence to survey even with the briefest attention, since all these matters are dealt with more fully elsewhere in writing. (p. 83)

And:

> Now at this time the monks of Canterbury were being deprived by Baldwin of all things and were being harassed day and night by armed men so that the resources of the church could not even provide anything to eat. (p. 85)

The modern reader may be only too content with this radically compressed report of what might seem to us an utterly tedious dispute, however important it may have been for Gervase's fellow-monks, but the various disparities of treatment in the two chronicles raise some intriguing issues.

A short sentence in the *Major Chronicle* particularly interests me. During the recounting of events in the year 1174, there is a brief subordinate clause within a sentence:

> . . ecclesia Christi Cantuariae tam mirabili quam miserabili incendio sui parte potiori cum quibusdam officinis curiae nonis Septembris combusta est. (I, p. 250)

Which can be translated as :

> . . the church of Christ at Canterbury, in a fire at once awesome and dreadful, was in large part burned, together with various administrative buildings, which happened on 5th September.

Under the date 1184, ten years later, there is the phrase 'the new choir' in the context of one of the many visits to Canterbury by various dignitaries involved in the long struggle between France and England. Since there are no reports of a fire or rebuilding in the *Smaller Chronicle*, these brief references might be all that we ever knew from Gervase about this devastating fire.

However, Gervase also wrote a separate text about the 1174 Christ Church fire, known as the *Tractatus de combustione et reparatione Cantuariensis ecclesiae*. It precedes the *Major Chronicle* in all three extant mediaeval manuscripts of the Chronicle and takes up nearly thirty printed pages in the Rolls edition. Without that additional text, all we would know from the brief mention in the *Major Chronicle* itself was that there was a fire and a new choir.

Yet this extraordinary 30-page tract includes the most elaborate account we have of the actual construction of a major medieval building in the whole of Europe. It details the year by year re-building of the eastern end of Canterbury cathedral. Though it does not deal with the nave I consider it here for its contribution to how we might think about history. From one perspective the tract has a very clear relation between time and narrative text since it recounts the re-building year by year. On the other hand, had this single text not survived, or not been written, the entire account of that complex rebuilding operation would simply not have been available to us: we would only have had that single sentence or so in Gervase and a few glancing references in other writers.

rebuilding

Unlike most of Gervase's other works, this text has been reprinted several times and a version is now available on the internet. I want to quote a fairly long passage from Robert Willis's translation in his *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral* (1845). By this point, we have already been told how the Master, William of Sens, was controversially selected for the job of rebuilding after the fire. The bracketed dates are inserted by Willis. The text reads:

> The Master began . . to prepare all things necessary for the new work, and to destroy the old. In this way the first year was taken up. In the following year, that is, after the feast of St. Bertin [September 5th, 1175], before the winter, he erected four pillars, that is, two on each side, and after the winter two more were placed, so that on each side were three in order, upon which and upon the exterior wall of the aisles he framed seemly arches and a vault, that is, three claves on each side. I put clavis for the whole ciborium because the clavis placed in the middle locks up and binds together the parts which converge to it from every side. With these works the second year was occupied.

Here the Latin term *claves*, literally 'keys', are the key-stones of a ribbed vault. Ciborium refers to the compartment of a vault. Willis's translation continues (somewhat amended):

> In the third year he placed two pillars on each side, the two extreme ones of which he decorated with marble columns placed around them, and because at that place the choir and crosses [crossings, transepts] were to meet, he constituted these principal pillars. To which, having added the key-stones and vault, he intermingled the lower triforium from the great tower to the aforesaid pillars, that is, as far as the crossing, with many marble columns. Over which he adjusted another triforium of other materials, and also the upper windows. And in the next place, three claves of the great vault, from the tower, namely, as far as the crosses. All which things appeared to us and to all who saw them, incomparable and most worthy of praise. And at so glorious a beginning we rejoiced and conceived good hopes of the end, and provided for the acceleration of the work with diligence and spirit. Thus was the third year occupied and the beginning of the fourth.

If this is difficult to follow or imagine, you can look at the actual building as it still stands, or as Frith photographed it about the same time as Willis's translation:

Most would probably agree with Gervase's remark that this part of the Cathedral 'appeared to us and to all who saw them, incomparable and most worthy of praise'.

Willis's translation continues:

> In the summer of the fourth year, commencing from the cross, he erected ten pillars, that is, five on each side. Of which the first two were ornamented with marble columns to correspond with the other two principal ones. Upon these ten he placed the arches and vaults. And having, in the next place, completed on both sides the triforia and upper windows, he was, at the beginning of the fifth year, in the act of preparing with machines for the turning of the great vault, when suddenly the beams broke under his feet, and he fell to the ground, stones and timbers accompanying his fall, from the height of the capitals of the upper vault, that is to say, fifty feet. Thus sorely bruised by the blows from the beams and stones, he was rendered helpless alike to himself and for the work, but no other person than himself was in the least injured. Against the master only was this vengeance of God or spite of the devil directed.

As the son of a one-time Health and Safety Inspector, I can't resist a wry reaction here: well, which was it, the vengeance of God or the spite of the Devil? Or did he just slip? Who was in charge of safety measures? And so on. The opening of the *Combustione* tract has a phrase saying that the fire happened 'justo sed occulto dei judicio' – 'by the just but hidden judgement of God' – though this comment is not included in some modern editions. However, to resume:

> The master, thus hurt, remained in his bed for some time under medical care in expectation of recovering, but was deceived in this hope, for his health amended not. Nevertheless, as the winter approached, and it was necessary to finish the upper vault, he gave charge of the work to a certain ingenious and industrious monk, who was the overseer of the masons; an appointment whence much envy and malice arose, because it made this young man appear more skilful than richer and more powerful ones.

Given the detail which Gervase has provided, do we read this passage as a modest hint of Gervase's own practical involvement in the rebuilding?

> But the master reclining in bed commanded all things that should be done in order. And thus was completed the ciborium between the four principal pillars. In the key-stone of this ciborium the choir and crosses seem as it were to meet. Two ciboria on each side were formed before the winter; when heavy rains beginning stopped the work. In these operations the fourth year was occupied and the beginning of the fifth. But on the eighth day from the said fourth year, on the ides of

September, there happened an eclipse of the sun at about the sixth hour, and before the master's accident.

And the master, perceiving that he derived no benefit from the physicians, gave up the work, and crossing the sea, returned to his home in France. And another succeeded him in the charge of the works: William by name, English by nation, small in body, but in workmanship of many kinds acute and honest. He in the summer of the fifth year finished the cross on each side, that is, the south and the north, and turned the ciborium which is above the great Altar, which the rains of the previous year had hindered, although all was prepared. Moreover, he laid the foundation for the enlargement of the church at the eastern part, because a chapel of St. Thomas was to be built there.

Gervase's year-by-year account with its contemporaneous explanation of the procedures involved in a major medieval building programme is unique in its precision, clarity, and detail. It perhaps bears comparison with the similarly unprecedented multiple eye-witness accounts of Becket's death. Some readers might find the architectural detail as uninteresting as the account of the Baldwin dispute. But in this case we can see for ourselves those very same pillars and can stand looking at the choir, the sanctuary, the chapel of St. Thomas, and its surrounding walls and triforia, while actually reading a copy of Gervase's text. At the very least, the account adds a certain dimension of time to what we see before us: the pillars become consecutive stages in a process as well as components in a structure.

From Gervase's account we even know, as we normally do not, the names of the two masters who supervised the building of this impressive section of the present cathedral. We might even be tempted to see Gervase himself in the reference to the young monk who took over while the injured master was still struggling to continue – in which case the account would be even more exceptional.

In the only three manuscript copies of the *Major Chronicle* the tractate was added as a kind of prologue. We can therefore be struck by the sheer contingency of its survival, and indeed of its composition. This very detailed description could quite easily not have been copied, or not have survived. We would then have had only those almost parenthetical remarks in the *Major Chronicle* about a fire and a new choir. Without Gervase's thirty-page tract Robert Willis would not have been able to write his very detailed study in 1845, arguably still the most illuminating and certainly the most engaging interpretation of the overall architectural development of any English cathedral. Indeed, we would not have had the most detailed contemporary account of any European cathedral building program in the whole mediaeval period. Yet we are not sure why Gervase wrote it, and nobody else seems to have composed anything quite comparable – as far as we know. Unlike almost any other mediaeval narrative account of an 'event' we can directly match the text against the surviving physical object.

Unlike, say, the traces of a battlefield, the 'history' which the tract recounts is still visible in front of us, almost an ongoing event in stone.

Gervase's account covers only the eastern end of the cathedral, the choir and sanctuary areas, and we don't have any similar contemporary account of either the earlier or the later re-buildings of the nave. So let me include the following remark from Gervase's text:

> The community was ejected by the fire from the choir, even as Adam from paradise, in the year of our Lord 1174, in the month of September, on the fifth day of the month, and about the ninth hour. They remained in the nave of the church five years, seven months, and thirteen days. And returned into the new choir in the year of grace 1180, in the month of April, on the nineteenth day of the month, at about the ninth hour of Easter Eve.

For those five years the nave, not the ruined choir, was the centre of monastic life, though this was not the nave which we can now visit. I rather relish the exact time details Gervase gives us, down to the very hour, because Gervase elsewhere questions the exactitude and reliability of historical dates. He was well aware that the traditional competing systems of dating available to him were impossible to reconcile, thus rendering even the date of the birth of Christ or of the crucifixion problematic for a chronicler. He specifically highlights the fact that, because of differing conventions for designating the start of a year, various writers on Becket's death disagreed about the year in which it happened.

Gervase on Becket

Since Gervase was professed as a monk by Becket himself and lived in the monastery in 1170 we might expect an account of Becket from him. In fact, there are three different accounts in Gervase's various writings. We have already noted the brief remarks in the *Minor Chronicle.* Another Gervase text has survived, but only in one manuscript, entitled *Actus Pontificum Cantuariensis Ecclesiae*, or the *Acts of the Archbishops of Canterbury*. As Stubbs writes in his editorial introduction to the Rolls edition (II, xli):

> Gervase has the credit of being the first person who attempted to reduce to form, and codify in order, the materials for the history of the archiepiscopate. He had before him lists of archbishops, carefully calculated and synchronised with the lists of popes: he had Bede and the Chronicles, and the lives of the Saints; and he had in the *Gesta Pontificum* of William of Malmesbury a sketch of what he was to undertake. With the Kentish hagiographies of Goscelin, the laborious works of Osbern and Eadmer, and the records of his own time, with the numerous charters and cartularies of Christ Church, and the roll of

episcopal professions of obedience, he had very satisfactory materials. And he used them fairly well, so well that his book, in spite of a few faults, has been and remains a standard authority.

I won't here discuss those other sources and authors, but we can note that it is partly because of Gervase, and the preservation of some of those materials, that the tablet in the nave can so confidently list the succession of archbishops. Gervase in his prologue to the *Acts of the Archbishops* writes about his intentions:

> Having already given a brief record (but to me a laborious one) of the names of the kings of Britain and England, with a short history of their exploits, searching after truth in the midst of uncertainty, it now devolves upon me, according to my promise, to turn my pen to the events connected with the proceedings of the archbishops of Canterbury. And since my intention is to do this with all conciseness and expedition, I am constrained to entreat the reader not to despise my style on account of its unpolished garb or succinct compression. But, should he desire further details, I have to refer him to those great volumes, of which the church of Canterbury possesses several, which treat of the lives, passions, and miracles of these fathers aforesaid; and there he will find his wishes abundantly satisfied.
>
> My intention is this: to recount the names of the kings of England and the archbishops of Canterbury, to specify the gifts or charters which each bestowed upon that church, just as I have oftentimes read them in the evidences; for which I trust I shall obtain from posterity their approval, if not for lore and eloquence, at least for industry. Some of these [gifts and charters] were conferred upon the archbishops themselves, others specially upon the convent, whilst a third class were granted to both; that is to say, to the church of Canterbury, as will hereafter appear.
>
> By God's permission I begin with Augustine, the apostle of the Angles, who was the standard-bearer for the other archbishops; and I thence proceed with his forty-two successors, ending with the venerable Hubert.

We then have the 'succession' of the Archbishops, one after another for several hundred years, covering about ninety pages in the Rolls edition (vol. II, pp. 325-414). The list of short biographies begins with Saint Augustine's arrival in 597 and ends with Gervase's contemporary, Hubert Walter, who was Archbishop from 1193 to 1205. Yet the text as we have it does not include the details of any charters or gifts, which we might have expected from the promise of the prologue. Nor is it at all clear to us what 'those great volumes, of which the church of Canterbury possesses several' actually were and how much of that material is still extant.

In due course, the *Actus Pontificum* includes accounts of both Becket and Baldwin. Baldwin is given just four pages, which Gervase introduces:

> I recognise that in this case I am going to recount the evil rather than the good which Baldwin did.

But then he devotes only a single paragraph to the lengthy and complicated dispute over the new college in Harbledown which he had covered in such enormous detail in the *Major Chronicle*.

For Becket, as we have seen, the amount of near-contemporary biographical material was considerable. Gervase knew Becket, was professed as a monk by Becket in 1162, and had himself witnessed the hurried burial of Becket immediately after his death. Yet the life of Becket in the *Lives of the Archbishops* takes just eight pages and is almost entirely copied from John of Salisbury, with occasional details from the *Lives* written by William of Canterbury and Benedict.

We thus have the three accounts of Becket, and of Baldwin, composed or compiled by Gervase, but on three very different scales. In the *Major Chronicle*, the account of the reign of Henry II takes up nearly 300 pages, of which about seventy are mainly concerned with Becket. The treatment of Becket in the *Lives of the Archbishops* takes just eight pages. In the *Smaller Chronicle* Henry's whole reign covers only eight pages of which a few sentences concern Becket.

In commenting earlier on the several accounts of Becket's death, we were in effect trying to 'zoom in' on the details of precisely what happened on one afternoon in 1170. We might be inclined to think of Gervase's three very different accounts of Becket and even more so of Baldwin as almost a kind of 'zooming out', from a few sentences in the *Smaller Chronicle*, to several pages in the *Actus Pontificum*, to scores or hundreds of pages in the *Major Chronicle*. There is however a different framework in which to locate this feature of Gervase's work.

Coelnoth

Let me give one more example of the aspects of 'history' I am trying to probe. Ceolnoth was mentioned earlier as both heading the list of Deans on the wall plaque and as later becoming Archbishop. Here is the complete entry on him in Gervase's *Actus Pontificum* :

> CEOLNOTH, the dean of the church of Canterbury, was next elected on the third of the kalends of June [30th May, A. D. 830]; and having been consecrated, on the sixth of the kalends of September [29th August] in the same year, he received the pall from Pope Gregory. A great mortality presently occurred in the church of Canterbury among the monks; all of whom died excepting five. This occasioned much

> grief and anxiety to the archbishop, who scarce knew what was best to be done in such an extremity; for now he saw only five monks where, when he was dean (an office which we call prior), there used to be a large convent; nor could any be found who would consent to become monks in this period of danger. Besides, at this juncture a great and novel danger had befallen Kent; for the Danish pirates, who were heathens, had arrived in the province, and had plundered it and murdered the inhabitants, first at the island of Sheppey, then at Thanet; one at the city of Rochester, another at that of Canterbury and its suburbs, and sometimes at Winchester and the surrounding districts. If at any time they were driven out and slain by the kings of England, they returned here in greater numbers than before; so that they who had arrived at first with three ships only, now appeared with three hundred and fifty. Sometimes the people of Kent paid them money, and entered into a firm and binding treaty with them; but as soon as the money which the Kentish men had promised was paid down, they devastated the whole of Kent. At this period St. Edmund received the crown of an illustrious martyrdom, as may be read in his glorious passion. Hemmed in with these difficulties, archbishop Ceolnoth gave commands to his priests and clerks (with the consent, however, of the monks, and at their request), that they should render the monks devout assistance in God's service, until more monks could be created on the restoration of peace. So, in the midst of much trouble, Ceolnoth sat for forty-one years; and having died, he was buried in Christ Church.

Those twenty or so lines comprise the whole entry on Ceolnoth and cover a full forty years of a crucial and complex time in the history of England. The very succinctness of this account perhaps induces regret or provokes frustration that such a period of turbulence, including a 'great mortality' (the plague?), increased Viking raids, and the briefly mentioned martyrdom of Saint Edmund, is so barely summarised. Clearly, Gervase's attention is particularly on the issue of the relation between the monks and the other clergy and people. What most concerns Ceolnoth in Gervase's account is the survival and independence of the monastery. Matters which might considerably interest a modern historian, for example the Viking raids, are treated simply as the context for this issue.

We can again register that the *Actus Pontificum* is, from our viewpoint, only a small fragment of what Gervase might perhaps have written. Though there is only one surviving mediaeval manuscript of Gervase's 'Lives of the Archbishops', his ordering of a 'succession' of biographies of Canterbury archbishops was later imitated, sometimes in an abbreviated form and sometimes on a massively enlarged scale. In the 1570s Archbishop Matthew Parker used the Canterbury manuscript of Gervase as a source for his *De Antiquitate Ecclesiae Britannicae*. Gervase's text was not itself put into print until 1652, in Roger Twysden's selected works of ten historians, *Historiae*

Anglicanae Scriptores Decem. Henry Wharton's *Anglia Sacra* (1691) included an addition to Gervase's text by a fourteenth century Canterbury monk, Stephen Birchington. Walter Hook's massive *Lives of the Archbishops of Canterbury* appeared in twelve 500-page volumes between 1860 and 1876.

The online version of the revised *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* now allows one to browse through more or less detailed biographies of all the archbishops of Canterbury, and there is an online guide to the sources for each life, available through the website of Lambeth Palace Library. For many of the later archbishops a substantial modern biography is now available. We might again reflect on the differences of scale, and the potential for both summary and expansion, in the writing of such biographies and of 'history' itself.

If an account of an event can be composed at such radically different levels of detail or summary, what – we might ask – is the 'right' zoom setting? On what scale does history operate?

datings

There are other aspects of Gervase's way of writing worth remarking upon. The *Major Chronicle* is organised according to dates, so that under the date for each year are several separate entries or paragraphs. These are characteristically concerned with three different categories of event: a development or incident in the activities of the feudal aristocracy, for example a battle in the long conflict between Stephen and Matilda; secondly, a record of the date of death of an emperor, king, or high-ranking cleric, in England or on the continent, and an indication of their successor; or, third, a brief mention of some unusual natural event such as a storm or eclipse, or an apparently miraculous incident.

The first and most frequent form of entry is not shaped as a consecutive narrative across the years but included as individual paragraphs separated within each year by the two other kinds of entry. To follow developments in the war between Stephen and Matilda, for example, a reader would have to look for the next relevant entries in subsequent years. Both English national and continental European developments might be pieced together in this intermittent way, but the Chronicle does not provide an explicit intertwining of these various chronological records. The second kind of entry would allow a very diligent reader to track, sometimes across widely separated years, the consecutive successions of various monarchies or archiepiscopal incumbents in particular cities. The third type of entry occurs fairly randomly and is occasionally marked explicitly as an omen.

It is the first kind of entry which has developed into what we would now probably characterise as 'normal' historical writing: the following through of a set of interconnected incidents or episodes to compose a consecutive and unified narrative strand. For example, tracing the development of the civil

war or the reign of a particular English monarch, but with other events, those on the continent for instance, being left out of the account unless they had some immediate relevance to the particular historical narrative being pursued or constructed. By these standards or criteria, the intricately detailed account of the long dispute with Baldwin could almost be a modern monograph or a Ph.D. thesis.

The second kind of entry, the death of a office-holder in a particular year and his replacement, might also foster the notion of succession we considered earlier. Such entries might be consecutively collated to help compose a series of lives of those office-holders. This, we might suppose, is what Gervase has mainly done in his *Acts of the Kings* (the *Minor Chronicle*) and in his *Lives of the Archbishops*, even if the 'successions' in the *Major Chronicle* are not narratively connected, but presented as separate entries. The effect is more like browsing the *Dictionary of National Biography* than following a standard narrative history.

The third kind of entry which records, for example, a major storm or a startling celestial event clearly operates somewhat differently. It would make little sense to string them together as some kind of successive series. Each incident seems to be recorded simply as memorable, and perhaps as fixing that particular year by recalling some unusual event which marks it out and thereby helping to order our recollection of the surrounding years. One might interpret the very brief mention of the cathedral fire in 1174 as operating in this way, not so much telling us that it happened in that year as using it to anchor the other events around it. A possibly supernatural event may also be taken as indicating some forthcoming momentous occurrence, an omen of a future yet to unfold.

In an unexpected way, perhaps, these omen-oriented entries anticipate a later solution to the problem of devising a coherent and reliable calculation of chronological time, a problem which had puzzled Gervase when he was faced with incompatible ways of reckoning past dates.

Whereas each society or culture may have its own local and idiosyncratic ways of calculating the passage of historical time, for example using the regnal years of a monarch or a significant event particular to that locality, the increasing need for the globalised compatibility of different dating and timing systems has finally led in the modern era to an increased reliance upon the allegedly universal and unchanging attributes of natural phenomena, even if not quite those which the mediaeval period would have regarded as celestial events: the globally integrated operation of SatNav satellites now depends upon micro-second calculations defined according to the oscillation rates of sub-atomic particles in atomic clocks, reliable to a variation of less than one second in a hundred million years – which some might see as an almost miraculous notion even for our own time.

Almost ironically, one passage in Gervase's work concerning a natural event has attracted considerable attention. In the early morning of 25 June 1178 he claims to have witnessed an extraordinary and explosive event. He

struggled for words to describe it, as indeed does my translation. Here is Gervase's Latin:

> Hoc anno, die Dominica ante Nativitatem Sancti Johannis Baptistae, post solis occasum, luna prima, signum apparuit mirabile, quinque vel eo amplius viris ex adverso sedentibus. Nam nova luna lucida erat, novitatis suae more cornua protendens ad orientem; et ecce subito superius cornu in duo divisum est. Ex hujus divisionis medio prosilivit fax ardens, flammam, carbones et scintillas longius proiciens. Corpus interim lunae quod inferias torquebatur quasi anxie, et, ut eorum verbis utar, qui hoc michi retulerunt et oculis viderunt propriis, ut percussus coluber luna palpitabat. Post hoc rediit in proprium statum. Hanc vicissitudinem duodecies et eo amplius repetiit, videlicet ut ignis tormenta varia sicut praelibatum est sustineret, iterumque in statum redirect priorem. Post has itaque vicissitudines, cornu usque in cornu scilicet per longum seminigra facta est. Haec michi qui haec scribo retulerunt viri illi qui suis hoc viderunt oculis, fidem suam vel jusjurandum dare parati, quod in superadictis nichil addiderunt falsitatis. (I, p. 276)

And my attempt in English:

> This year, on the Sunday before the Nativity of Saint John the Baptist, after the sun had set, at the first sight of the moon, there appeared a remarkable sign, visible to the five or more brothers sitting watching it. The new moon appeared shining bright, with the lower horn of the crescent extending towards the east; and then suddenly the upper horn split in two. From the middle of this division shot out a burning torch, a flame, like coal sparks expelled to a great distance. During this the body of the moon was as if being tortuously turned around, and to use the words of those who told me what they saw with their own eyes, the moon was convulsed as if bitten by a snake. Then it reverted to its proper state. This violent change was repeated twelve or more times as if it was enduring the ordeal of torture by fire, and again it reverted to its former state. After these vicissitudes there was a kind of blackness for a while from one horn to the other. The men who saw this with their own eyes, and reported to me all these things which I am recording, are ready to swear on their honour that nothing false has been added to what has been written above.

What precisely Gervase and his fellow monks saw, and the date he recorded it as happening, have featured in a long debate among astronomers. The description can be interpreted in terms of an asteroid impact just behind the rim of the moon. In 1976 the planetary geologist J. B. Hartung proposed that Gervase may have witnessed the creation of the

impact crater now named after Giordano Bruno. Unfortunately, later research has indicated that on that particular date the moon was not in a crescent form and was not in any case visible from Canterbury. Nevertheless, several such recorded impact events have led some astronomers to conclude that they are the result of a cluster of meteorites and asteroids whose orbit is intersected by the Earth every year in late June, and are possibly the remains of a fragment of Comet Encke. In honour of Gervase, the periodic reappearance of this stream of meteorites is now known as the 'Canterbury Swarm.' He might have been pleased to be so remembered.

readers

However, in so far as we judge Gervase as a 'historian' we might find some of his practices puzzling. Especially if we treat him as a source for some form of general history of the period about which he writes, we can find him unsatisfactory and unpredictable. He seems to offer either an over-extended or an extremely compressed account, or he leaves out things we might expect him to write about. Even constructing a coherent narrative account from his major Chronicle is difficult.

Here, for example, is Antonio Grandsen, who included one of the few modern overall assessments of Gervase in her comprehensive *Historical Writing in England*:

> Gervase's works have value for general history (for example they have an important text of the Inquest of Sheriffs in 1170, and a unique account of the second coronation of Richard I in 1194 at Winchester). But there is no doubt that though Gervase's obsessive love of Christ Church provided the motive for his historical writing, it also in general proved a severe limitation. Eadmer's view of history had narrowed as he grew older and found Christ Church increasingly harassed with difficulties. Gervase's view started narrow and remained narrow. He was unable to concentrate on, or appreciate the importance of, national and foreign events.

And:

> Gervase ranks himself among the chroniclers. And though this shows a laudable humility, it also reflects a sad truth. For the very wealth of literature in the Christ Church library was in one respect his undoing. He was an uncritical copyist of other people's works, producing a patchwork of secondary authorities even for the period which he could remember

Denys Hay in his *Annalists and Historians* is even more unkind: he dismisses Gervase as a 'hack'.

However, as I indicated earlier, there is a different framework in which to understand Gervase's work. That Gervase's texts only survive in a few or even a single Canterbury manuscript is significant. Those manuscripts may now be housed and consulted in Corpus Christi College, the Parker Library, or Trinity College, or the British Library. But they were originally written to be kept in the library of his own community, among the extensive collection of manuscripts at Christ Church itself. There was no particular assumption that his texts would be copied and distributed elsewhere. Most obviously, the account of the re-building of the east end of the cathedral would have been of relatively little pertinence except in Canterbury itself, where a Canterbury monk might well want to go and look for himself with Gervase's manuscript to hand. As, thanks to printed copies, we now can.

Though Grandsen, like Poole, quotes the passage from Gervase's prologue concerning the difference between chronicler and historian, she overlooks his explicit declaration in the same prologue:

> I don't wish to take note of everything which is memorable, but only in so far as they need to be remembered, those things which are seen to be worthy of memory. And I would not think of myself as to be numbered among those who are writers of chronicles because I write not for a public library but for you, my brother Thomas, and for our little monastic family. And because I know that wasting time is inimical to the soul, I have taken the trouble to occupy my own leisure with this business of writing.

Now read again the passage quoted earlier:

> It now devolves upon me, according to my promise, to turn my pen to the events connected with the proceedings of the archbishops of Canterbury. And since my intention is to do this with all conciseness and expedition, I am constrained to entreat the reader not to despise my style on account of its unpolished garb or succinct compression. But, should he desire further details, I have to refer him to those great volumes, of which the church of Canterbury possesses several, which treat of the lives, passions, and miracles of these fathers aforesaid; and there he will find his wishes abundantly satisfied. My intention is this: to recount the names of the kings of England and the archbishops of Canterbury, to specify the gifts or charters which each bestowed upon that church, just as I have oftentimes read them in the evidences; for which I trust I shall obtain from posterity their approval, if not for lore and eloquence, at least for industry.

At first, when reading this today, we almost automatically assume that 'the reader' so addressed is some version of ourselves, or at least that the reader whom Gervase has in mind is any reader who might be consulting

his text. But the reader he actually intends is his 'brother Thomas' and the rest of his Canterbury community and the plea not to be despised for his style is wryly addressed to his fellow monks who might well personally comment, helpfully or otherwise, on his work. The promise was made to them, not to some unknown scholar in the future. The 'reader' evoked here could indeed simply go and look at the 'great volumes' elsewhere in the library since the envisaged reader is himself located in that same library.

When Gervase offers an extremely compressed account by comparison with a more expanded version, his original reader could, if he so chose, go and read the longer account – Gervase's own – in the Christ Church library. If a fellow monk is reading the *Major Chronicle*, in one of the only manuscripts of it, he will already have read or at least noticed the tract on the 1174 fire which opens the same manuscript, so the passing reference later will not need to be explained.

Before ploughing through the hundreds of pages recounting the quarrel with Baldwin any interested monk will already have been able to read the much more lively rhetorical arguments concerning the case against Baldwin which preface two of the three copies of the *Chronicle*. Brother Gervase has, he implies, saved his fellow monks a great deal of trouble, and accordingly hopes that his 'industry' might be appreciated for doing so. Indeed, the titular distinction between *Major* and *Minor* chronicle may simply and colloquially have referred to the physical size of the two compilations: one could ask the librarian for either Gervase's 'big' manuscript or his 'smaller' manuscript.

To some extent, moreover, when Gervase provides an ordered sequence of the archbishops or the dates of royal reigns the primary purpose is to provide reference points with particular attention to validating the monastery's own charters and other records of donations, transfers of ownership, bequests and agreements, each with various witness signatures to be identified and dated with reference to local authentifications. From that perspective we can see most of Gervase's work not so much as writing 'history' or even a 'chronicle' but rather as providing texts ancillary to the institutional continuity of the Christ Church monastery. Hence his concern for the problem of reconciling different ways of calculating dates. It is only when his manuscripts are removed from that context, that physical location in the Christ Church library itself, that we are tempted to criticise him according to today's scholarly assumptions and even to raise questions of the kind explored earlier. As I pointed out, and Grandsen complains:

> his account of the Becket controversy is taken almost entirely from the standard Lives of Becket, although Gervase knew the archbishop and was at Christ Church during his archiepiscopate.

But Gervase had addressed his assumed reader:

> Hence it came to pass that many persons influenced the king's mind prejudicially against the archbishop, and a disagreement arose between them, and was long protracted. If anyone desires to know the cause and beginning of this discord, its progress and its end, let him examine those large volumes which are written upon this subject: that is to say, the life of him penned by master Herbert, who shared with him in all his sufferings, save that of martyrdom; and another written by William, the monk of Canterbury, who appended thereto an account of his miracles. Let him also read the volume of his Letters, which prior Alan compiled. Let him read the miracles penned by Benedict, of which he was an eyewitness, together with that short sketch by John, bishop of Chartres. He may also, if he will, pay a passing visit to Gervase, who reduced into a short chronological narrative the doings of the archbishop. But more of this hereafter.

Again, Gervase is providing a guide to which sources to look at in the Christ Church library itself, including his own other work. He is not compiling a research bibliography. Grandsen acknowledges that 'To some extent Gervase aimed to provide a useful compendium of accepted authorities, a sort of 'reader's digest'.' But she immediately adds: 'Indeed Gervase had little critical sense'. Yet clearly what Gervase is claiming for his work is the useful community service of diligence in excerpting, summarising, expanding, and extensively quoting from the numerous and perhaps less easily legible older manuscripts that are to be found in his own monastery's library.

For that very reason a great deal of 'his' corpus is not his. I commented earlier that much of mediaeval history writing would now be regarded as composite plagiarism. I can illustrate what I mean by a brief comment on some of the content incorporated into the *Actus Pontificum*. The accounts of the very earliest archbishops of Canterbury are simply copied from Bede's *History*. The account of Coelnoth quoted earlier is composed from several separate yearly entries in the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* as is that on Elphege. The later figures who are given the most detailed accounts are Dunstan and Lanfranc, with Dunstan's life taken entirely from the earlier Canterbury monks Osbern and Eadmer, while Lanfranc's is from a mixture of sources. The five pages on Anselm are a character sketch more or less directly copied from Eadmer and from John of Salisbury. The account of Theobald is abbreviated from Gervase's own *Large Chronicle*. And so on. These 'sources' were all manuscripts to be found in the Christ Church library, next to the cloister where his fellow monks read, wrote, and made more copies.

The *Minor Chronicl*e or *Gesta regum* incorporates passages from other historians even more extensively than the *Actus Pontificum*. Stubbs prints the *Gesta regum* in the Rolls edition and where Gervase quotes directly from other historians, such as Henry of Huntingdon, Florence of Worcester, or Richard of Hexham, the Rolls text carefully prints these quotations in a

smaller font size, so it is comparatively straightforward to see just how much Gervase is simply copying from these sources – all of which would also have been in the library. Gervase only rarely explicitly references other writers, but he makes an exception for his fellow Christ Church monk and predecessor Eadmer, by providing specific acknowledgements to Eadmer's *Life of Odo* and his *Historia Novorum*. Again, this is local homage to a valued fellow monk rather than an academic footnote by a professional historian.

'the whole body that aches.'

It is difficult for us now fully to register what it meant to be writing in a monastic scriptorium, or indeed in a cold cloister, producing hand-written copies from existing manuscripts, rather than working as an author composing a work to be printed and distributed. To read a manuscript was not necessarily simply to read it to yourself. Reading often involved making a copy, more or less faithful to the original, but also incorporating relevant additions, passages from other writers, corrections on one's own authority, and so on. This included, of course, the regular copying of the Bible itself to make a 'glossed' version, incorporating the commentaries and other contributions by previous authoritative readers of the Bible, the 'Fathers of the Church', whose comments would not be inserted into the sacred text itself but sometimes systematically arranged around brief snippets of the Scriptures on each page, in the form of layout that was known as a *biblia glossa ordinaria*.

The physically demanding practice of compiling a new manuscript, as one copied, collaged, and collated different texts from several existing manuscripts, was a very different activity from preparing a typescript to be subsequently printed. A scribe's concluding colophon laments: 'Remember dear reader that though it is only the finger and thumb that writes, it is the whole body that aches.' Each mediaeval manuscript was a unique physical object marked not only by its content, which might be reproduced in another manuscript more or less exactly or faithfully, but also by the characteristic script or recognisable handwriting of a local scriptorium or an individual scribe, by the particular way in which the skin had been prepared, the choice of colours for rubrication or illumination, the physical folding and splicing of separate pieces of vellum or parchment, and so on.

Each of these individualizing features was considerably modified and to a large extent eradicated as the process of printing more or less identical copies of a work became dominant, albeit with editions differing according to the practices of individual publishing houses. Yet it may be that some elements of medieval scribal composition are now newly apparent in the idiosyncratic possibilities of online publication and digital composition, though that may not be the most significant facet of the current post-printing revolution.

The function of a monastery's historian, chronicler, or annalist might be performed by any brother assigned to have appropriately authorised access to the manuscripts in the community's library. It was a useful service to provide a summary, précis, or composite collage of those sources and to add to them, as John Stone added the names of the dead. After Gervase died around 1210 his works were copied (we don't seem to have his autographs) and the same physical manuscript of the 'smaller chronicle', or *Acts of the Kings,* was repeatedly added to by a succession of monks whose names we don't know but whose shifting interests and emphases can be indicated by again simply using page count as a measure.

Using the Rolls Series pagination, Gervase's work amounted to about a hundred pages and his continuators added an additional two hundred. The first writer of the continuation returned to 1207, to the appointment of Archbishop Stephen Langton, and then the text from 1207 onwards is another bricolage, with radically varying ratios between the number of pages and the span of years covered, so that from 1228 to 1237 takes just three pages, whereas 1238 to 1241 takes fifty-five pages, and then 15 pages are entirely taken up with a single letter of Boniface. We know that the account from 1242 to 1270 is itself a version of a later Christ Church manuscript, a copy of which has survived but badly burned. The five years from 1272 to 1277 take thirty-nine pages, while the account of the eight years from 1278 to 1286, when the text finally concludes, seems to have constituted an official Canterbury annals.

Summarising past events and recording contemporary developments are still functions of professional historians, but today we further demand of them that they also be original, or at least revisionist, and preferably controversial, before we acknowledge them as fulfilling the appropriate duty of a modern academic historian. The mere continuation of someone else's work or the editing and translating of sources now earns less respect than radical new interpretative exercises. Some of the quotations I have included are taken from *The Church Historians of England*, volume V, part 1, published in 1858, as edited and translated by Joseph Stevenson. The volume which includes some of Gervase was one of an ambitious series which translated a range of English mediaeval 'church historians'. Several somewhat similar 19th-century series included the Bohn Library of British mediaeval historians, the editions and translations by A. J. Giles, the publications of the Parker Society, the Library of Anglo-Catholic Theology, the abandoned project for a 'monumenta anglicana', and of course, the never completed Rolls Series itself. These multi-volume publishing enterprises made available selections of mediaeval texts presented primarily in terms of their contribution to an overall national history and largely premised upon the notion of individual authors writing narratives which could be recruited or drastically ransacked to make some specific and perhaps otherwise unrecorded contribution to that 'national' history. It was against that model,

or assumption, that Gransden's dismissive judgement of Gervase as a 'historian' was measured.

Nevertheless, we can still recognise the issues raised by Gervase's texts. In particular, that the 'same' history can be recounted at drastically different 'resolutions' or with very different foci. The time covered may be calibrated according to the same dates and intervals but the radically different assumed relative importance, relevance, or weight allocated to any historical event or period can often be measured by how many pages or words are accorded to it.

One familiar example might be mentioned: in the English school curriculum, and still in many history text-books aimed at secondary education, almost no attention is paid to the centuries between the fourth and the fifteenth. Whereas a school term might be devoted to 'the Industrial Revolution' or to 'the rise of the Nazis', the entire 'Middle Ages' is accorded only a kind of ghostly existence, rather like those anonymous soldiers. One reason for my quoting extensively from Stone and Gervase, rather than only summarising or paraphrasing them, is to help bring home the particularity even of the relatively few mediaeval records which have survived the severe winnowing of the printing revolution. Gervase, however little we actually know of him, was just as real as ourselves, even if he could never have imagined you or myself as his 'reader'. Even though we can still work in the present Canterbury Cathedral library. And admire the choir columns, if not the nave, he once knew.

writings

I remarked, when first introducing Gervase after the opening quotation from Poole, that a text which simply quoted or incorporated the whole of a previous text would now strike us as odd, perhaps as plagiarising. Yet the more we reflect upon the ways of composing which I have briefly sketched, the more we might recognise some practices from this later mediaeval period as having recently re-emerged in new but related forms. A monastic scribe would most certainly have welcomed the ease of digital cut and paste.

We have seen in the work of Gervase, and others, that a small detail might be vastly expanded, or a substantial account might be reduced to a sentence or so. A unique account may survive, or not. Perhaps only an abridgement survives of a more substantial text. A particular life may be summarised in twenty lines, as in Coelnoth's case, or written about at length in a dozen biographies of Becket. A narrative may be continued by another writer, quoted from, closely imitated, completely plagiarised, simply ignored, and perhaps (though we cannot now know) wholly forgotten. A unique manuscript may have been lost or burned long ago, or may still be waiting to be printed for the first time, or digitised and put on-line. Previously unknown manuscript texts can appear unexpectedly from x-rays of palimpsests or be retrieved from the bindings of later printed volumes.

In addition to these various aspects, an obvious element in the modern development of history-writing has been the immense proliferation of secondary accounts, all ostensibly dependent at some remove upon what we like to think of as 'primary material', particularly accounts by a near-contemporary or especially an eye-witness. There has also been an enormous expansion in the source materials available to scholars and the reading public, including the proliferation of web-sites making digitised records available on-line. Thus the writing of 'history' might now seem able to be expanded or abridged almost at will, or – to use again that optical metaphor – we can apparently focus with whatever level of zoom lens we prefer. Though we could note that there is often a kind of vanishing point, where, for example, the only extant record simply enumerates the bare sum of a few thousand anonymous figures about whom almost nothing can be known.

Consider a minor example: in the 1960s I was researching a particular moment in English working-class history and came across a figure called John Gast, who had been active in some entangled dock-land disputes in 1802. After some work I was able to put together only a brief paragraph or two on him. A decade later an entire book was centred on him, Ian Prothero's *Artisans and Politics in Early Nineteenth Century London: John Gast and his Times* (1979). Another figure from that period, Samuel Bamford, left two autobiographies and a diary, and several modern scholars have discussed him in detail, including myself. But at present almost everything I know about another nineteenth-century 'Samuel Bamford' is that he died in an attack on a mill. Yet with the increasing popularity of family history and local history I would not be at all surprised to find that this other Samuel Bamford has now been or soon will be rescued from silence.

And yet. No attempt at writing 'history' can ever be fully comprehensive. If only from the various literary works of the 18th century and the Modernist moment, we know that any attempt to write even a single person's life is intrinsically asymptotic, by which I mean that the writing can never catch up with the reality, the text can never capture in full the lived density of an actual life. No matter how many pages are added to the attempt.

Laurence Sterne's *Life and Opinions of Tristram Shandy* (nine volumes, 1759-67) makes the point by mockingly demonstrating that the attempt to write a life of oneself, an autobiography, can never quite get under way, since even a complete narrative of one's very birth is always to be pursued in vain: if he tried to give *all* the details for the day of his birth Tristram would never even get to be born in his own text. Henry Fielding's *Shamela*, a satirical parody of Richardson's *Pamela*, emphasised the absurdity of 'writing to the minute' by having the heroine furiously scribbling an account of her own ravishment even as it occurred. We can read a conscientiously enormous biography of, for example, George Eliot and yet, while knowing that she claimed to suffer from a headache every day of her adult life, realise that no

biographer can do more than occasionally mention that fact. Every account, except perhaps in her own diary, of a particular day or incident in her life can hardly begin, yet again, by noting that she had a headache that morning.

We can now browse the meticulously edited volumes of the diaries of Samuel Pepys or of Thomas Hearne, or the collected letters of T. S. Eliot or Samuel Beckett, and yet know that, despite those millions of words recorded on an almost daily basis, what we might think of as gaps and silences remain. In the early twentieth century Marcel Proust explored the endlessly re-shaped process of searching for the pattern of the past time of one's life. In *Ulysses* James Joyce delighted in the epically impossible task of apparently detailing the passing incidents and flickering thoughts of just a single day in Dublin. Samuel Beckett's *Krapp's Last Tape* anticipated a characteristic dilemma of the digital generation, of having an overwhelming accumulation of personal records and mementoes, no longer only written diaries and photo albums, home-movies and audio tapes, but now also email backlogs and archived chat-room conversations, old Twitter feeds and Facebook exchanges, mobile phone records and daily blogs, and so on.

Even the institutional capacities of a dedicated modern archive can baulk at the task of recording contemporary history. An American university with a multi-million-dollar grant for preserving newspaper and television coverage of events in China despairingly discontinued the project when in 1989 the student protests in Tiananmen Square and the government reaction to them generated hundreds of acres of newsprint and many miles of linear television video.

Faced with these familiar aspects of the problem of 'writing history' one response is to reject any ambition of comprehension. If it seems theoretically possible to zoom into whatever level of scrutiny we choose, then we may opt either for minute micro-specialisation or for overall but merely schematic generalities. The connection between the two modes or scales can then become precarious in the extreme.

On the one hand, we know that even the most detailed sources can leave us with insoluble puzzles. Despite those unprecedentedly detailed and converging accounts of the last afternoon of Thomas Becket's life, we still do not know, as we stand in the cloisters, which of two possible routes he actually took from his palace to the doorway into the church where he died. Nor can we be sure of what he actually said. Still less can we be confident of knowing his motives. And yet we can still feel that at least one version of 'what he said' must be the 'true' one – even if we don't know what it was or even whether it was recorded by any of the extant sources.

On the other hand, unless we can conscientiously base ourselves upon an endlessly incomplete reading of all available sources, we cannot confidently claim wholly to understand even a single century: for example, the years from 1100 to 1199, recounted in those 500 pages of Gervase's *Major Chronicle*. Moreover, Gervase himself refers us further to those 'great volumes' in the archives of Canterbury, which may well have since perished.

I once asked a colleague, Pat Collinson, who later became Regius Professor of History at Cambridge, to give an introductory lecture on current views of 17th century English religious history, for an undergraduate literature course. For an hour or so he detailed a dozen current debates concerning religious developments in the century, citing in each case the several historians who took different sides on each issue – and wryly concluded that the more we knew the less, it seems, we could be absolutely sure of. I recall another Cambridge professor, Kitson Clark, recommending as the ideal topic to choose for a manageable Ph.D. thesis in history some almost forgotten micro-event, such as the (perhaps mythical) Tooting Bec railway strike of 1911.

The combined effect of these two zoom ratios, the minutely microscopic and the asymptotically panoramic, has produced a familiar impasse in historio-graphy. Especially if the model for the writing of 'history' is a single author attempting to achieve a mastery over all relevant sources and comprehensively organising his or her understanding into a printed volume. A partial alternative is the multi-authored work. Collinson himself once edited an impressive collection of essays by different experts, each writing on a different period or topic, which was published as *The History of Canterbury Cathedral*. We are familiar with those multi-volume series with numerous eminent contributors, *The Cambridge History of* . . The professional journals for academic historians are, from one viewpoint, variations upon this model, each article a contribution to a constantly elusive and endlessly procrastinated synthesis, an ongoing argument never to be concluded.

Nevertheless, the dominant ambition of 'writing history' remains, as in the nineteenth-century model, a 'history book', with a linear narrative or at least a linear organisation, a sequence of pages to be turned, intended to be read probably in a consecutive order. We have most directly inherited this model from printed book production based upon a fixed sequencing of physical pages. Moreover, the printed book is arguably not simply a model for writing history but for our very notion of history itself.

Again, Walter Benjamin's image of 'homogenous empty time' evokes a sequence of homogenous empty pages waiting to be inscribed. However, if we persist in conceiving of 'history itself' as a kind of book, as a linear matrix or framework, within which we operate, into which we are born and from which we exit when we die, we are perpetuating a profoundly limited way of writing and understanding history which still derives fundamentally from the conceptions of the feudal period: history as 'succession' in an empty time. Is there an alternative, and does thinking about the nave or the cathedral, perhaps as a strange kind of 'history book', suggest one?

Why might such issues concern us anyway? Why not be content with the familiar television dramatisations of 'The Tudors' or Hollywood epics of Roman emperors and gladiators, popular biographies of the wives of Henry VIII, or the imaginative fiction of historical novelists? Or, if one prefers, Shakespeare's history plays or Tarkovsky's *Andrei Rublev*. It used to be

claimed that we could 'learn lessons' from studying history. The Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci argued that what was most important was not specific lessons but the recognition that history, the past, was once very different and that therefore the future need not be a mere repetition of the present. Indeed, Gramsci suggested that any serious political thinking about a possible future alternative to the mere extension of the present political-economic system might have to draw upon modes that preceded the current epoch of capitalism. Which might be one reason for looking again at aspects of medieval monasticism. In any case, to accept uncritically a particular mode of history-writing, as often reinforced in those television popularisations, may disable us from recognising that our very conception of 'history' could be different. What still interests me at the moment is not writing an alternative history, or even imagining an alternative future, but exploring an alternative way of conceiving of history and of thinking about time.

liber vitae

The kind of 'book' which constitutes John Stone's chronicle suggests a possible model and an instance of a specific temporality. The monastery's *liber vitae*, 'book of life', was not to be read through consecutively as a narrative of past events, or even as a history of the monastery, but was to be consulted as the ritual need arose, for commemoration and celebration. Each deceased brother was not recorded primarily as a past moment but as an opportunity for present remembrance and reflection. The fraternal community not only constructed its own internal time rhythms, its own liturgical calendar and its own monastic 'seniority', but was also envisaged as having its own kind of continuity, a trans-generational existence. Moreover, just as the material buildings of the monastic and cathedral complex were the accumulated and overlapping work of now-anonymous architects and masons across several decades or even centuries, it is part of this modality that a 'chronicle' attributed to the author 'Gervase' should actually have been a collage of previous writers and a multi-authored continuation by several subsequent generations.

Such chronicles incorporated charters and land bequests not simply as records of past events but as ongoing guarantees of current entitlements, as 'quotations' with direct present application. As a land-owning corporation a monastery was in some respects similar to a political dynasty, but monastic time was not primarily shaped by the struggle for feudal assets, or by competition between contending agents. It was rather conceived as the shared time of a collective community which saw both its deceased brethren and its future monks as members of the same community. John Stone's attitude to his dead brothers is radically different from that of a military accountant totting up corpses. One might even be indirectly reminded of another remark by Walter Benjamin: that not even the dead are safe from fascism. In some respects, monastic time was a suspension of

historical time, partly akin to the classical notion of *otium*, of productive leisure, and partly anticipatory of a radically transformed mode of time. Crucially, the time that was constructed by the monastic way of life was not solely a matter of a different consciousness or conceptualisation of time, but the embodied practice of a different organisation of time, an actual alternative temporality. Perhaps a better term would be tempo, as both a process and its temporal character.

Thinking about medieval scribal composition can alert us that we already have available an alternative compositional model to the traditional printed book, in the development of the World Wide Web, itself a crucial component of a contemporary reorganisation of time, of tempos. The overall format of the web, in a user's experience of it, is not linear or narrative but hyper-textual, a matter not of pages being composed or read in a given consecutive sequence but of links established and connections explored, in effect an ongoing bricolage and collage being endlessly constructed and reconstructed with no fixed sequencing. Moreover, the more or less momentary hyper-linked configurations initiated during an on-line browsing session are not just of texts but, in some respects, of times. A palimpsest of past and recent or current on-line contributions can be momentarily composited as we keep several windows or browser tabs open on the same screen and as we activate a variety of available links. Unlike having several books open on the desk which were published at various times, perhaps with cross-referenced footnotes, the web provides almost instantly interwoven chains, pathways, and connections to which our actual browsing automatically constitutes a further and ongoing contribution, immediately incorporated into potential search results and automatically recorded preferences. Every inquiry trail we construct or pursue becomes potentially a search-engine trace for others to follow or modify. We are not so much 'succeeding' a previous author or 'continuing' their work as collaboratively compositing a manifold collective and ongoing constantly changing and re-constituted global 'text'.

Though the web is replete with digitised sources and collections of primary materials, including images of manuscripts, and a plethora of secondary commentaries, there is no overall synthesis to be established and certainly no single comprehensive author or reader. Though the resources of the web can obviously be used as part of the process of composing traditional written historical and other works, such products themselves may then become incorporated into an continuous global interweaving which essentially operates without either pause or summation.

In one sense, the web can be seen simply as a globally accessible library, and it has always been the case that no historiographical endeavour could hope to assimilate and organise the entirety of the contents of all libraries. But, as in other areas, the development of the web may be suggesting not just alternative ways of composing history books but an emerging alternative conception of 'history itself'.

If traditional historiography once concentrated on the actions of a limited range of 'important' individuals and on those aspects of power and conflict most relevant to those individuals, one of the significant characteristics of the kind of composition being increasingly enabled or enacted by the technical development of the internet is that the recording and composing of 'history' is no longer left to professional historians, and concerns have shifted correspondingly.

Gervase's distinction between the historian and the chronicler effectively dissolves when we consider the input of many millions of individuals into the apparently limitless multiplication of contemporary archives and the proliferating storage of texts and images daily deposited into the net's multitudinous databases. The dominant compositional model even for an individual life may no longer be that of constructing a written narrative, or indeed of writing at all, but the uploading of components of, or ongoing contributions to, the constantly changing content of several billion smart phones, tablets, laptops and so on. It is no longer a matter of a monk interviewing the ordinary folk who came on pilgrimage, or even a chronicler noting an individual experiencing fifteen minutes of celebrity for being swept up into the air, but now the stored output of many millions of individual recording angels, or personal apps, more or less constantly archiving their own passing times.

In particular, what is most apparent from this development is an insistence that each life-time, not just that of a king or archbishop, is unique, an individual time which began and will end. Between that beginning and that ending your and my time is, on this increasingly explicit model, composed of a complex and vulnerable but singularly personal configuration of multiple ongoing rhythms and cycles. It may be that from some perspectives many of the individual life-events so assiduously recorded and circulated by millions can seem remarkably, or perhaps banally, similar to those involving many many others. However, an emphatically different assertion is made on a daily basis by those who constantly upload images of their children, their pleasures and entertainments, birthdays and holidays, travel snaps and video diaries, weddings and funerals. Their repeated affirmation is that every one's individual life-time may be technologically entwined with but is emphatically not to be identified with billions of other irreducibly specific human life-times and life-moments. It is this multifarious catena of individual records which now constitutes what we can increasingly register and store as contemporary 'history'.

tech traces

We might consider further implications, resonances, and possibilities. The cinematic metaphor deployed earlier of zooming in and out, of close-up detail or panoramic wide shot, can be supplemented by imagery drawn not

from celluloid film but from digital photography. A digital image with a high compression ratio or pixels per inch resolution can be decompressed or expanded so that a small image manifests much more visible detail, an effect closer to extreme deep focus. This is reminiscent of how Gervase operates in his abridgement and expansion of his various accounts.

Other computer-related metaphors or images can be deployed to characterise how we might increasingly reconceptualise 'history'. The use of the menu category often named 'History' in a browser toolbar indicates not so much a causal chain of linked and consequential events as a comprehensive but editable and rearrangeable list of web locations visited, and thereby a record of what had been and may still be only briefly a more or less disconnected variety of interests and inquiries. On the other hand, that stored list (as 'Library') may also readily enable the flexible reconstruction of a perhaps fleeting set of connections, whether from personal interest or for commercial appropriation. The often adjacent toolbar category of 'Bookmarks' operates more like an address book potentially covering the entire global net than as a simple marker of pages of interest in a single volume. The significance of both kinds of list is of course transformed when they are accessible not simply to the user who created them but to a surveillance program, whether that of a government intelligence service or a commercial corporation such as Google or Amazon, which can store, retrieve, reconstruct, and attempt to interpret and compose a 'profile' from the browsing and searching activities of a single individual or an entire category of web users.

The increasingly unavoidable automatic storage and archiving of a consumer's shopping preferences, email correspondence, political tweets, and so on, also implies the possibility of the deleting or erasing of entire records of digital transactions as if they had never occurred at all. The development of such projects as the Internet Archive or the Way Back Machine, with over 300 billion past web-pages made currently accessible, also highlights the possibility not only of preservation but also of future eradication or manipulation of a substantial component of the recent historical record. The *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* may have left blank lines for years when 'nothing happened' or seemed worth recording but we might find in the future that entire global data banks have become effectively blank, due to incompatible or defunct technologies: merely uncountable billions of uninterpretable digital numbers, ones and zeroes. Or realise that the entire digital record is no longer able to be securely distinguishable from deliberately manipulated fake news and fake history.

Some attempts have been made to ensure that a sequence of digitally recorded transactions is permanently secure from falsification, and open to public scrutiny, as in the block chain technology operating in the case of bitcoin and other alternative forms of currency. A related intention is at work in, for example, the practice of making publicly available the record of revisions and edits of Wikipedia pages, while the principle that such pages

are open to critical scrutiny and suggested amendment by any reader considerably modifies the received protocols of authoritative expertise and credibility. Though the prospect always remains of the digital equivalent of a devastating fire in the library.

Insofar as this range of practices and technologies has become familiar in the recording and storage of contemporary online and other activities, it is worth asking how far they are in the process of also transforming our perception and conceptualisation of the past. This is not simply a matter of accessing or composing the historically oriented pages of a Wikipedia, for example, or of enabling the further collaborative accumulation of interlinkings between historical topics, incidents, and persons, so that – to deploy the optical metaphor – whatever initial level of focus a user might choose, they can, by following a set of proffered links, pursue their opening inquiry on a smaller or larger scale or scope, or be offered lateral connections they might not have anticipated. Ideally, they might also be alerted to the contested or controversial character of specific historical accounts and claims more easily and unavoidably than if they were simply consulting a separate monograph written from a particular perspective. Recall the comment by Pat Collinson, that the more one knows the less one can be absolutely certain of. Which does not, of course, prevent individual browsers from opting for a deliberate narrowing of focus or exploration, content to practise a wilful echo-chamber myopia.

Some other aspects of Gervase's work might now seem unexpectedly familiar from the experience of extensive web browsing. What is a detail in one account or web entry might be the major focus of a different but now linked record. What may be totally absent from one record may constitute the bulk of a previously unconnected one. What seemed irretrievable may unexpectedly be added to the available historical record from an unpredictable source: perhaps a casual user of Wikipedia realising that they can make a significant contribution or provide a document otherwise unknown, literally a missing link. There can be an enhanced awareness that without some form of record or documentation, an event or person might as well have simply not existed at all. A search for a specific level of a family tree may result in an irresolvable blank even when logically that level of transmission or generational succession cannot in fact have been wholly empty. All these elements were and remain possible features of storage and retrieval systems based upon print or even manuscripts, but the speed of ongoing revision coupled with almost instant access is transforming our awareness of the interrelatedness of resources.

More generally, there may be an increased recognition not so much of the enormously expanded availability of sources and evidences for the past but also an enhanced awareness both of the asymptotic nature of all such recording and of the even more enormous realms of the utterly unknown and unknowable. It may be that precisely because of the apparent increased ease of search and inquiry that the limits not just of the current technology

but of the permanently irretrievable itself may be more readily acknowledged. At a certain level, a recognition may be reinforced that there are only two possibilities: either that the whole of the past which is, or perhaps will ever be, available to us in any recordable form must already exist in the present, even if as yet undiscovered or unretrieved, or that any elements of the past which do not in any way exist in the present can and will simply no longer exist for us. There can be, and indeed has been, a final extinction of data as well as of endangered species.

It is not only in the satirical case of Schrödinger's cat in quantum mechanics that the act of looking can in effect trigger the difference between existence and nonexistence: if, *per impossibile*, we were eventually to arrive at a total indexing and storage of all extant past records, then anything not actually findable in that corpus must be regarded as at best hypothetical or perhaps only imaginable. We may never be in a position to find out where those relics of saints once recorded by Eadmer were actually located or what, if anything specifiable at all, happened in those years for which the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* leaves a blank in the annual line apart from the date itself. This does not mean that the past did not exist but that the past which can ever matter to us must already somehow exist in some form in the present.

It's worth remarking that the history of the Web itself includes directions not taken. For example, Ted Nelson's original conception, developed from the 'Memex' notion of Vannevar Bush, was called 'Xanadu' and his basic proposal was not that of making links to other webpages or the incorporation of short embedded quotations, clips, or snips, as text, sound, or image, as is dominantly the case now, but rather developing a network of links between entire documents so that the particular signposted segment was highlighted but nevertheless located in its complete original context. A variant, which preceded even the early hyper-books of Amiga and Apple, was the UNIX-based *Guide* program developed by Peter Brown which, instead of the activation of a link taking the user to some other text or web page, resulted in the expansion of the text being read by the insertion into it of the relevant extra material, so that a text would be linearly expanded as the reader pursued the suggested connections. An early but undeveloped variation of what became the dominant hypertext markup language (HTML) allowed users of a hyper-linked body of material deliberately to leave a suggested path-way through the material navigated and for subsequent users to choose to follow that trail and to supplement it or to suggest alternative routes through the entire network of material. Such once-alternative procedures were indeed closer to the collective compilation of a mediaeval chronicle in a monastically organised scriptorium. As is the facility on Wikipedia for assembling in pdf form a combination of separate entries in order to compose one's own 'book'.

The practice of compiling a continuous chronology through a succession of scribes and a consolidated copying and re-writing of previous chronicles

was not just a feature of practical manuscript transmission but embodied a kind of solidarity and continuity of the brethren perpetuating the copying practice itself. In the printing era the cooperative enterprise of the scholarly community was communicated, and the entire academic apparatus increasingly sustained, through the provision of footnotes, bibliography, acknowledgements. It is an open question whether the web can develop appropriate protocols for making authorial dependence transparent and for negotiating between the lures of cut- and-paste plagiarism and the demand that information be free.

collage

Walter Benjamin's unfinished 'Arcades Project' was ostensibly concerned with the shopping arcades of nineteenth-century Paris. What survives is a large collection of manuscript excerpts, hundreds of passages transcribed from a variety of sources and in particular from daily newspapers and many other ephemera, a collage of quotations partly linked by intersecting cross-numbered arrangements rather than by any fully explicit commentary, still less by an overall linear or narrative organisation. The published form of Benjamin's 'project' is thus more like a web-site than a traditional printed book. His own term for this mode of composition was 'constellation'. Benjamin once said that his ambition was to compose a work consisting entirely of quotations, and that his procedure was that of a rag-picker, a forager among the detritus, perhaps more like the practice of a detective, a collector, an antiquarian, than the scholarly methods of the academic historian. Benjamin's intentions were profoundly political. In his 'Theses on the philosophy of history' he wrote:

> A chronicler who recites events without distinguishing between major and minor ones acts in accordance with the following truth: nothing that has ever happened should be regarded as lost for history. (Thesis III)

For the still dominant concept of history there is a sense in which both the past and the future have a lesser existence than the present. The past has already departed into a kind of nothingness which can at best be only partially reconstructed or retrieved, while the future can barely be envisaged by a tentative process of extrapolation from the tendencies and preoccupations of the present. Above all, the vast majority of individuals who existed in the past are indeed, in Benjamin's phrase, 'regarded as lost for history', despite efforts to 'rescue the poor stocking-weaver . . from the enormous condescension of posterity' (E. P. Thompson).

An extremely small number of named elite individuals were often presented in mediaeval chronicles as the prime agents who construct history. Those who were and are recorded only among the un-named

zeroes of several thousand dead soldiers were credited only with a kind of secondary existence and efficacy. Far more of the vast population of the dead were not accorded even this minimal kind of semi-ghostly past existence and were given no place at all in the historical record: for example, the even more anonymous wives of those anonymous soldiers. In what we can call 'feudal history', as in feudalism there are different classes of people. Those in the first-class are not only named but endowed with an individual remembrance and a celebrated after-life. Second-class historical citizens receive only a collective mention which may figure in the margins of some commemorative inscription, allowing them a purely numerical gesture of acknowledgement. The lowest class does not even qualify as a citizen of the domain of history at all but might as well not have existed, except perhaps as a conjectural statistic.

Compare this with the attitude conveyed in John Stone's chronicle: that every dead brother is recorded in a comparable ritual remembrance, their names ordered by the annual day of their demise rather than by any worldly hierarchy of status. By circulating, as was the custom, the names of the recently dead to a network of other monasteries, each individual was to be incorporated into a potentially global chain of ongoing commemoration. Moreover, the liturgical calendar included a feast of 'All Souls', a day upon which even the unknown and totally anonymous were accorded recognition and supplicatory prayer, a celebration of the 'communion of saints'. Respect paid today to 'the unknown soldier' is a faint echo of this practice.

This hierarchical 'feudal' concept of historical agency still predominates in the reporting of the contemporary doings of international politicians, corporate businessmen, and globally successful entrepreneurs, often as if, like renowned military commanders, their activities and enterprises were entirely of their own individual making. On a broader scale, those who live within the most affluent 5% or 10% of the global population (and the total USA population amounts to less than 4% of those currently alive) may well find it almost incomprehensible that what they can take for granted as a normal utilisation of resources (the astonishing amount spent on cosmetics or pet food, on fashions or – to bring it closer home – on books) represents a staggeringly privileged relative expenditure compared with what is available to those many more millions at the other pole of global wealth. The current rapacious consumption and destruction of diminishing natural resources by the living global population as a whole may itself one day be retrospectively regarded as an utterly disproportionate exploitation of what might otherwise have been available for the many more billions of those who might, or might have, come after us.

There is an uncomfortable parallel or continuity between these different modes of unequal appropriation, including the allocation of relative attention in the media coverage of global events, and how we regard the 'history' that has led to this present. Which may further suggest the need for

a basic revision or reconceptualisation of what we mean by historical time, including the past, present, and future.

Of course, to pursue the issue of how much time, or how many pages or words, to devote to a specific figure, event, or period, in a more less expanded or compressed historical account is as fruitless and almost as meaningless an endeavour as to calculate days of purgatorial suffering in terms of days of penance, or numbers of prayers, or amounts of charitable donation. We could however reformulate the question in terms of human time. It is surely not meaningless to ask how much time a human life does, could, or should now consist of. Yet by the most basic of measurements there are enormous disparities in global life expectancies. In other words, in the disproportions of resources accorded to individual lives, and deaths. And in the span of attention and range of recognition to which we have been attuned by deeply engrained ways of telling the tale of everybody's history.

seize hold

It was one aspect of the monastic vow of celibacy, of chosen childlessness, that even the present living brethren were, at least in theory, to be given no preferential treatment over those of the future. The monastery's communal resources and collectively-owned assets were under the care of a temporary stewardship and not wholly to be disposed of merely to meet current needs or the demands of an accidentally favoured few who happened to live in the present.

It was also part of the emotional tenor of monastic life that the community's dead were always physically present, whether in the monks' cemetery adjacent to the living quarters or in the various tombs and shrines visited regularly in weekly processions. It was not just the reading out of their names that was part of the daily texture but the actual visiting of the sites of their remains. The mediaeval cemetery of Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire has recently been excavated and located as immediately next to the monastic church. It contains the bodies of over two thousand monks, datable across several centuries, neatly arranged in stacks of four.

Contrast this attitude with the momentary response of an individual tourist standing before a barely decipherable memorial to a once eminent but now almost forgotten soldier or statesman. On the whole, our current overall conception of history as the cumulative record of the past (and future) dead is perhaps more akin to the indifferent stance of the tourist than to the affective recall of the monastic brethren. But could it be different?

Benjamin's sixth thesis is:

> To articulate the past historically does not mean to recognize it 'the way it really was' (Ranke). It means to seize hold of a memory as it flashes up at a moment of danger.

He adds a coda:

> Historicism contents itself with establishing a causal connection between various moments in history. But no fact that is a cause is for that very reason historical. It became historical posthumously, as it were, through events that may be separated from it by thousands of years. A historian who takes this as his point of departure stops telling the sequence of events like the beads of a rosary. Instead, he grasps the constellation which his own era has formed with a definite earlier one. Thus he establishes a conception of the present as the 'time of the now' which is shot through with chips of Messianic time.

Benjamin, it is worth recalling, translated two volumes of Proust's *À la recherche du temps perdu*.

By quoting fragments of Walter Benjamin himself in this way I am of course partly mimicking his own practice. But the model I would prefer to that of rag-picker is that of archaeologist. An archaeologist does indeed pluck a fragment out of the physical continuum of the past, the dust, soil, detritus. A glass paperweight which sits on my desk incorporates a tiny fragment of stone labelled as 'from the original nave' of Canterbury Cathedral.

Perhaps we could think of the internet and indeed of 'history' more as a vast archaeological site than as a library of books or an unfolding linear narrative. On an archaeological dig, we don't know what we will find, and at what level of excavation, until our attention is directed to that particular site and we actually start digging. One observation or application is that we simply don't know what 'lessons' we might need or be able to learn from the remains of the past.

In particular, what the vast proliferation of the World Wide Web suggests is a new conception of the relationship between any particular individual and history. It is not simply that, just as an archaeologist might treat every unearthed bone fragment or pottery shard as potentially significant, so we can recognise that every internet upload contributed to and assimilated into the enormous fabric of the web might one day be plucked out of the continuum, for reasons we cannot anticipate. Moreover, in ways that were not previously possible, every individual can now to some extent decide their own relation to the history which gets recorded. Especially since the always laborious and still relatively privileged acquisition of written literacy is no longer required. (I am dictating this text to voice-recognition software.) In addition to the welter of digital traces of our activities automatically and involuntarily recorded, we can now to some extent

consciously choose what personal digital profile, or indeed quasi-fictitious *persona*, in selected texts, images, and sound, to leave behind us, while recognising that, as with previous archival technologies, a future digital archaeologist may be faced only with unintelligible fragments from our present enormously proliferating yet perhaps eventually unrecoverable or indecipher-able databases. Or, potentially, the self-interested destruction of entire global archives by a relative few with the technological power or perverse commercial or political motivation to do so. Even archaeological sites can be deliberately obliterated, as recent fanatics have demonstrated.

Gervase's *Lives of the Archbishops* concludes with the life of his contemporary, Archbishop Hubert Walter, who died in 1205. On the last page of his work Gervase wrote:

> On the morrow he went to the vill called Tenham, on the eighth of the Ides of July, where on the third day afterwards he was unexpectedly attacked with a very severe illness, and reduced to the greatest extremity of danger. Having summoned G[ilbert de Glanville], bishop of Rochester, and G[alfrid], prior of Canterbury, and others of his faithful monks, clerks, and laymen, with much precision he caused his will to be executed and written; from which it can be easily seen how wisely, and with what clearness of memory, and with what love to the church of Canterbury, it was drawn up. Then having received the viaticum with the greatest devotion, and the other sacraments which appertain to one in his condition, he died upon the third of the Ides of July. His body having been conveyed to Canterbury, was met by the convent with much respect, but also with much sorrow; and the due solemnities having been performed; on the morrow he was consigned to the grave with the utmost veneration, and with many tears and lamentations, on the second of the Ides of July, being the fifth day of the week. He presided over the church of Canterbury for eleven years, eight months, and twelve days. . .
>
> He gave to the church of Canterbury these ornaments. He granted and confirmed to the precentor the church of Halegest, for the purpose of amending the books of the church. Also he gave to the same church of Canterbury two palls interwoven with gold, three chasubles, three copes, three dalmatics, three tunicles, three albs, three stoles with maniples, two amices, a golden chalice, and two cruets of crystal. He also gave a portable altar made of calcedony stone, a cross, a portion of the Lord's cross, a girdle, and a comb of ivory, six mitres, and three pairs of gloves, all of which were beautifully adorned with jewels and gold. Also he gave mitres and gloves without gold, candlesticks and cruets, and a censer of silver, and basons of silver gilt, two cloths of silk woven with gold, three pins of gold, a silken napkin, a knife of jasper, and another of horn, a vessel of crystal containing balsam, a cup of gold and another of silver gilt, three silver saucers for chrism, four

> golden rings set with precious stones, a good carpet, a bible, containing the old and new testaments, a psalter, glossed, four chests, one cushion, and three horses. He also gave to the church an excellent chapel, which in his testament he styled his best; but on the condition that the convent should spend three hundred marks for his soul. But all this king John took away from the church.

In 1890 a tomb in the south-east aisle of the cathedral was opened. It had previously had no definite attribution. Inside there was a corpse, and also a remarkably preserved bishop's crozier, a cope, and even some slippers, those of Archbishop Hubert Walter, identified by the inscription on a lead tag. An archaeologist is never quite sure what she is likely to find. Gervase's tract on the burning of the Cathedral begins by quoting from Eadmer's account of exactly where the bones of old Anglo-Saxon saints had been located in the cathedral which had been burned down. Perhaps one day, we may even find them too.

In March 2020 the remains of a corpse in the parish church of Folkestone were identified by modern archaeological techniques as probably those of the seventh-century Saint Eanswythe, who founded one of the first monastic communities in England, around AD 660, and was a grand-daughter of King Ethelbert, the first convert made by Saint Augustine of Canterbury.

EADMER & ANSELM

The problematic relationship between a single individual and their changing historical time comes to prominence in the writings of the most interesting of the mediaeval Canterbury historians. Gervase's predecessor Eadmer wrote two texts which particularly concern me: a life of a single individual, an Archbishop of Canterbury, Saint Anselm; and another text, entitled *Historia Novorum*, which might be called a history of his own time. It is the relation between these two texts which we can now explore. Though it will then take us some time to stroll round to Saint Anselm's chapel and to consider Anselm's own writings.

Eadmer, or Edmer, was a monk at Canterbury Christ Church in the decades immediately after the Norman conquest and some modern commentators have regarded him as the finest mediaeval English historian since Bede. R. W. Southern, once the doyen of English historians of the later mediaeval period, offered this judgement:

> When Eadmer began to write, some time in the last decade of the eleventh century, there had been no historian of undisputed merit in England for nearly four hundred years. Bede, the first and greatest of English medieval historians, had died in 735. Since that date there had

> been a few entries in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle distinguished by vividness and passion, a few passages of intimate revelation of character in Asser's *Life of King Alfred*, and a few works of biography which we should be very sorry to lose but could wish had been done better. Of genuine history – history with a theme of some magnitude and a certain elevation of view – there was nothing. It was this that Eadmer was to supply. He never claimed, as his younger contemporary William of Malmesbury was later to claim, that he was the immediate heir to the great Bede. Perhaps he had too just an idea of his own limitations to make this claim. He had not Bede's learning nor his life-long dedication to scholarship, nor his judgment. But he saw that he had a great theme and he seized his chance; he was the witness of great events, which he undertook to recount with simplicity and clarity. His success was proportionate to his aim; it was a modest success but within its limits complete. No one before him – not even Bede – had been so successful in evoking the character of his hero; no one, except Bede, had been so successful in writing a history which we can still read today for the interest of the story that it tells and the incidents that it brings to life.

Southern wrote a joint study of Anselm and Eadmer, *St Anselm and his Biographer* (1963), edited Eadmer's *Life of Anselm* (1962), and wrote a foreword to a partial translation by Geoffrey Bosanquet of the *Historia Novorum* (1964), from which I have just quoted. In 1990 he published *Saint Anselm: a portrait in a landscape*, a partly revised version of the earlier account in response to various scholarly disputes.

Anselm was by any standards a figure of European stature as a theological thinker, and as Archbishop of Canterbury from 1093 to 1109 he was embroiled in one of those favourite topics among professional historians, the 'Investiture Controversy'. In addition, a study of Eadmer's work can involve such issues as alleged forgeries, about which archival historians like to argue, as well as offering considerable scope for basic quarrels over interpretation, an exercise which excites all academics.

For non-specialist readers, however, what vividly emerges from Eadmer's work is his exceptional flair for presenting the personal characteristics which influenced the actions of his various protagonists. In his account of Anselm's life we are given an extraordinarily intimate depiction of Anselm as a memorable teacher. The *Historia Novorum* mainly covers the relatively few years from Anselm becoming Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093, through his various exiles, to his death in 1109, while the *Life* of Anselm adds more material from his birth in 1033 through his thirty years as Prior and Abbot of the monastery of Bec in Normandy, from 1063 onwards.

I intend to discuss Anselm as a philosopher and theologian in a different context. Here I will be concentrating on Eadmer, exploring some possible reasons why Eadmer was an unusually readable writer, why he wrote two

contrasting accounts of Anselm, and why the title of the *Historia Novorum* is almost paradoxical. Eadmer's impressive work directly raises several issues concerning the nature of history as well as illuminating a crucial moment in the history of Canterbury Cathedral, and indeed of England.

insincerity

There was a long-running dispute between Southern and another Anselm scholar, Sally Vaughn, over Anselm's motives and whether he should be seen as an innocent dove lost amid competing political manoeuvrings or as an astute political operator hypocritically angling for the very post he claimed he wanted to avoid, that of Archbishop. Paraphrasing Eadmer, Southern composed a vivid passage, dramatising the moment when Anselm was proclaimed as Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093 (1990, p. 190):

> The king attempted to press the pastoral staff into his clenched hand, and when he failed, the bishops forced open his fist and closed his fingers round the shaft. Anselm was then carried into church with the crozier thus held in his hand in the midst of acclamations, 'Vivat episcopus' and 'Te Deum', while he continued to cry out 'Nihil est quod facitis.' So the long day ended in tears and confusion, but with Anselm, however reluctantly and certainly un-canonically, still in possession of the archiepiscopal crozier. What the future would be no one knew. Or did Anselm know? That is the question.

Southern then comments:

> Everything depends on the sincerity of Anselm's protestations, for which we have not only Eadmer's vivid account, but also Anselm's own repeated statements. If we believe him, we shall think that the whole prospect was abhorrent to him. If we do not believe him, and think that his words were a calculated reaction to a situation which in his heart he welcomed, then we must think that, with whatever mitigation, he persistently mis-stated the truth. There is really no half-way house between these two positions, for we do not rely only on Eadmer's account of events; we have Anselm's own solemn and repeated declarations to the monks of Bec, to the bishops of Evreux and Beauvais, and finally to the pope.

The dispute between Southern and Vaughn revolved round what was already an old question. Here is R. W. Church writing in 1888 about that same moment in 1093:

> If Anselm's reluctance was not deep and genuine, the whole thing was the grossest of comedies; if his reluctance was real, the scene is one of a

> thousand examples of the way in which the most natural and touching feelings may be expressed in shapes, which by the changes of times and habits come to seem most grotesque and unintelligible. But if it was a comedy, or even if he did not know his own mind, then the whole view which was taken of Anselm in his own time was mistaken, and the conception of his character on which the present account is written, is fundamentally wrong. His writings, the picture of the man shown in his letters, and the opinion of those who knew him by reputation and of those who knew him best and wrote of him, have conspired to lead us wrong.

What is at stake for these historians is the status of Anselm as a man of integrity, and indeed as a saint. But is it that clear-cut? Are motives always or necessarily a matter of 'no half-way house'? What is interesting, in any case, is that Southern can seriously discuss this very issue of Anselm's sincerity partly because for almost the first time in English historical writing Eadmer seems to allow us a glimpse into the elusive realm of complex or opaque motivation in his central character. However, I am not concerned to try to adjudicate the issue as posed in those terms, with the focus on arriving at some judgement on Anselm. Rather, I want to probe Eadmer's own writing, to understand why he presents Anselm as he does. I am primarily concerned with what I would call 'Eadmer's Anselm'. The critical question is not, for me, about Anselm's 'sincerity'.

I therefore want to quote at some length from Eadmer's own detailed account of this crucial episode in the *Historia Novorum*, partly to illustrate again the difference between a paraphrase and a more complete quotation, but primarily because it is precisely Eadmer's detail, his close-up mode, his way of writing, that seems to me to allow a questioning of the usual focus of attention. Unavoidably however, the passages I want to quote directly concern the somewhat tedious issue of the investiture and I can only suggest that you deliberately focus upon the writing itself.

Eadmer's tale

I use my own translations but provide page references both to the 1884 Rolls edition, edited by Martin Rule (R, with page number) and to Bosanquet's 1964 translation, entitled *Eadmer's History of Recent Events in England* (B). Here is the passage which Southern's short paragraph summarised (R32, B33):

> In the meanwhile the King was urged by several good men to deliver from her long widowhood the mother church of all the realm by installing a pastor for her. He freely agreed, saying that he had already turned his mind to the matter. And so the question was raised as to who was most worthy of this honour. But, as everything hung upon the

word of the King, he took the initiative himself and proclaimed, followed by the affirmation of everybody in one voice, that the Abbot Anselm was the most worthy of that appointment. Anselm was appalled at this acclamation and turned pale. As he was hustled off to the King, for him to receive archiepiscopal investiture through the pastoral staff from the King's hand, he spiritedly resisted and asserted that such was decidedly not possible because of a multitude of objections.

So the bishops then took him and led him away from the crowd, telling him in these words: "What are you doing? What are you you thinking of? What are you trying to do contrary to God? You can see that the whole of Christianity in England is nearly expiring, everything has come to confusion, every kind of abomination has arisen all around, we ourselves and those churches of God we are obliged to rule over have fallen into danger of eternal death through the tyranny of this man, yet you who could prevent all this, simply disdain to do so. What on earth are you thinking of, you astonishing fellow? Have you taken leave of your senses? The church of Canterbury in whose oppression we are all oppressed and destroyed, call upon you, raise up our voices to you, and implore you in our anguish; but you, putting aside her liberty, putting aside any consideration of our plight, and spurning any cooperation in the efforts of your brothers, you seek only your own peace and quiet.

It's worth noting that, as with the accounts of Becket's martyrdom, we are here offered what are presented as *verbatim* reports of speech. Is this really what was said at the time? How much depends upon our trust in the accuracy of these attributed words? The passage continues:

To this Anselm responded: "Wait a moment," he said, "I beg you, wait a moment, and listen. I recognise that it is true: 'tribulations are many and help is needed' [Ps. 33]. But consider, I implore you. I am already well advanced in age, incapable of any earthly toil. I who am unable to labour even for myself, in what way can I undertake to labour for the whole church order established throughout England? As regards such matters, as my conscience bears witness to me, since I have been a monk I have fled from worldly business, nor have I ever been able willingly to involve myself in them, because nothing in such matters offers anything in which I could find love or delight. Why should I not remain in peace, why not decline to be involved in business which I have never loved and which will not achieve anything worthwhile?" "If you", they replied, "at least undertake the primacy of the church and hesitate over nothing, but go before us in the way of God, directing us and guiding us as to what we should do, then be sure that we will commit to you that in following and observing what you command we

will not fail you. You will see to God's concerns for us, and we will undertake all the worldly business on your behalf." "What you say is quite impossible," he said. "I am the Abbot of a monastery in another kingdom, I owe my obedience to an Archbishop, I am subject to an earthly Prince, I have a duty of oversight to monks to whose counsel and assistance I am committed. I am bound to all of these, so that I can neither desert those monks without their agreement, nor excuse myself from the dominion of that Prince without his permission, nor remove myself from my obedience to that Bishop except at danger to my soul unless he absolve me from it." "As for all this", they said, "take advice, and it will be easy to get the agreement of everyone." But he replied "Not at all. No way is it possible to do what you intend." Then they dragged him to the sick King, and described his obstinacy. The King was distraught almost to the point of tears and said to him, "O Anselm, what are you doing? Why do you deliver me to the torments of eternal pain? Call to mind, I beg you, the faithful friendship my father and my mother showed to you, and which you always had towards them; and upon that friendship I appeal to you, not to allow me their son to perish in both body and soul. For it is certain that I will perish, if I end my life holding the Archbishopric in my own power. Come to my assistance, help me, my Lord Father; and take up the office of bishop, for keeping hold of which I am confounded now, and truly will be worse confounded in eternity." Everybody around him was deeply affected by these words, but since Anselm was still excusing himself, and still not willing to undertake such a great office, they turned on him, directing at him with indignation and consternation reproaches such as these: "What madness has taken over your mind? You create turmoil for the King, you pile up more turmoil when you are not ashamed to make things worse, even though he is already dying, through your obstinacy. Now therefore you must know that every disturbance, every oppression, every crime, which from now on will befall England, will be blamed upon you, if today you do not prevent them by taking up this pastoral care." Left in these straits, Anselm turned to the two monks who were with him, namely Baldwin and Eustace, and said to them "O my brothers, why do you not come to help me?" He said this, I tell you, before God himself, because I would not lie about it, in such a state of anxiety, as he used to maintain, that if he were given such an option, how much happier, saving his obedience to the will of God, he would choose to die, than to assume the dignity of the archbishopric.

We can pause to register a certain ambiguity. Eadmer writes of 'reproaches such as these', so he is not necessarily confirming that these were the exact words spoken, and he does not include himself as one of the two monks who were with Anselm, yet nevertheless the vivid way he writes

implies that his account is almost that of an eye-witness and therefore to be trusted: *ecce, coram Deo, quia non mentior* – 'look, before God, I am not lying'. Eadmer continues:

> Thereupon Baldwin answered: "If it is the will of God that it should be so, who are we that we should go against the will of God?" His words were followed by tears and his tears by a great flow of blood from his nose, making evident to all from what heartfelt sorrow his words and tears proceeded. On hearing such a reply Anselm cried, "Alas, how quickly is your staff broken in pieces." Then the King, realising that the efforts of them all were being exerted without success, ordered everyone to fall at Anselm's feet, if in that way he could be brought to consent. But what happened? With them kneeling down, Anselm himself fell on his knees before them and still did not allow his original resolution to be over-thrown. Getting more agitated with him, and accusing themselves of weakness for the delay they had allowed for his objections, they cried: "Fetch the pastoral staff, the pastoral staff!" Then, with his right arm firmly gripped, they took care, some dragging him against his resistance and others pushing him, to bring him to the nearby bedchamber. But when the King proffered him the staff, he closed his hand against it, and in no way consented to accept it. The bishops indeed were trying to force his fingers, which he held firmly rigid, so that the staff could be inserted into his hand. But, truly, when they had spent some time wasting their energy on this useless effort, and he himself was crying out in pain at the suffering he was enduring, nevertheless, prising his index finger so that it fell back in a reflex action, the staff was placed into his closed hand and with the hands of the bishops wrapped round his hand it was held tight and the staff retained. Then while the crowd acclaimed him, "Long live the Bishop; long may he live", the bishops and clergy began with uplifted voices to chant the *Te Deum*; and so the Archbishop-elect was carried, rather than conducted, into the nearby church, resisting as much as he could and saying, "What you are doing is null and void, null and void."

This is as detailed and compelling an account as those of Becket's death, but again the issue is inevitably raised as to what 'really' happened, if not in this way. The quite extraordinary business with Anselm's fingers being pressed onto the pastoral staff is probably what is most remembered from this passage, but the reasons for this kind of detail are not immediately apparent. The account continues:

> When all the rituals usual on such occasions had been performed in the church, Anselm returned to the King and said to him: "I tell you, my lord King, since you will not die of this current sickness I want you to know that you will still be able to set right what has just been done, for

I have not consented and do not now consent to its ratification." Having said this he turned about and left him.

The brief summary by Southern quoted earlier might be compared with this long quotation, but only thus far, since Southern at this point concludes: 'So the long day ended in tears and confusion'. But in Eadmer's account the incident is far from over and the arguments have not ended. We are now given this elaborate address:

So Anselm left the chamber with all the bishops and the entire nobility of the realm trailing after him. Turning to face them, he put his position to them in the following words: "Do you understand what it is that you are attempting to achieve? You are trying to harness together under a single yoke an untamed bull and an old and sickly sheep. And what will be the result of that? Given the untamed ferocity of the bull, the sheep, which should provide wool, milk, lambs, will be dragged through the thorns and briars, while the bull, if it does not free itself from the yoke altogether, will so lacerate the sheep, that the sheep, unable to produce any of these good things, will be utterly useless to itself or to anyone else. What follows? Without thinking, you have coupled the sheep with the bull. But think of the church as a plough, as the Apostle says: 'You are God's husbandry; you are God's building'. This plough in England had two oxen, outstanding above all the rest, drawing the plough by ruling, and ruling by drawing the plough. That is, the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The one by human justice and sovereignty, the other by divine doctrine and authority. Of these two oxen, one, Lanfranc the Archbishop, has died and the other, having attained the fury of an untameable bull while still young, is set to the plough. Do you really want, in place of the ox that is dead, to put in harness with this untamed bull myself who am but an old and feeble sheep? You understand perfectly well what I am saying. I want you to consider what it is that you would join to what, and after considering desist from what you have started. If you do not desist, I tell you in advance that I, of whom some might have had the wool and the milk of the word of God and lambs for his service, will be crushed by the king's fury, in excess of what you can now imagine, and be worn out by injuries inflicted by him, so that the joy you now have in me, as giving hope of your deliverance, will be turned into sorrowing and anguish for many, when they find in me nothing of that counsel they could expect or help for which they had hoped. By that you will only ensure that the church which you earnestly wish to revive from her widowhood, will relapse into a widowhood even while her pastor is alive, which will be a much worse outcome when you witness it. And to whom will these evils be imputed if not to your selves who have so unthinkingly conjoined the ferocity of the King and my imbecility. When therefore, after I have

been crushed, and there is none of you who will dare to oppose the King in anything, then without doubt he will not hesitate to trample on you in whatever way he chooses."
As he said this, his tears burst forth and, unable to conceal the grief in his heart, he sent away the assembly and withdrew to where he was lodging. This took place in the year A.D. 1093, on 6th March, the first Sunday in Lent.

And so the King ordered that without delay or any further qualification Anselm should be invested with all that pertains to the Archbishopric.

This dramatic account undoubtedly implies that Eadmer was present to hear and memorise this long discourse. He includes the kind of detail which surely only an onlooker would record: 'His words were followed by tears and his tears by a copious flow of blood from his nostrils.' There is also the fluent recounting of what seem to be the actual impassioned words of the exchanges. But we might well suspect that the apparently *verbatim* speeches are more like Gervase's 'imaginations' than the alleged direct speech of Becket's death-scene. If only because we know that Eadmer's text was written, or at least finalised, many years after the actual event and even after Anselm's death. Southern convincingly argues that the extant redaction largely dates from 1109 to 1114, with additions as late as 1120 or so.

That the account is retrospective is clear in any case from the way in which Anselm seems so unerringly to prophesy what was indeed to happen later, and also from the specific elements which the account highlights. The later conflict over 'investiture' was to revolve around precisely the action which is highlighted. Note the phrase: '*ut per virgam pastoralem investituram archiepiscopatus de manu ejus susciperet*' in:

As he was hustled off to the King, for him *to receive archiepiscopal investiture through the pastoral staff from the King's hand,* he spiritedly resisted and asserted that such was decidedly not possible because of a multitude of objections.

In effect, the almost ludicrous physical struggle to make Anselm's fingers close around the pastoral staff anticipates very exactly what would much later be seen as the primary symbolic site of the notorious dispute: the right of the King to 'invest' a bishop precisely by handing him the emblem of his ecclesiastical office, the crozier.

Southern argues that royal investiture was not a contentious issue for Anselm until after he had attended the Easter Council at Rome in April 1099 and had heard for himself the insistence by Pope Urban II upon a position which had been vigorously promulgated by his predecessor Hildebrand, as Pope Gregory VII in 1075. The 19th-century editor of

Eadmer's text, Martin Rule, argues otherwise: that Anselm was aware of the papal prohibition of royal investiture even when he was made Abbot of Bec. There is also the complicated matter of precisely what was meant by the *consuetudines* which were appealed to as justifying royal investiture as an established 'custom', and the difference between 'investiture' and the various meanings of doing feudal 'homage' as involving the recognition of a lordship over a feudal subordinate – all of which Martin Rule investigates at great length.

Almost certainly, however, feudal homage and even royal investiture had not been a particularly contested or controversial issue in England either before the Norman Conquest in 1066 or during the reign of William the Conqueror. Lanfranc had apparently accepted the pastoral crozier from the hand of the King without any objection. And Eadmer does not actually record Anselm voicing on this occasion any objection to royal investiture as such, though the vague phrase 'many reasons which made this quite impossible' might be taken as implying such an objection. In fact, by the time of Eadmer's final version of the *Historia Novorum* a compromise over the entire contentious issue had been reached, in England at a Council of London in 1107 and more generally at the Concordat of Worms in 1120. And the compromise was precisely that while feudal homage could be accorded, the pastoral crozier itself should not be accepted from the hands of the King.

Noticeably, therefore, Eadmer's way of presenting the scene as in 1093 specifically makes it clear that Anselm could not be accused of having accepted the crozier from the king, since it is the bishops who grip his hand, and its being offered is not the same as accepting it: 'his closed hand and staff and hand together were pressed and held fast by the hands of the bishops'. Moreover, Anselm's objections rest upon the claim that, as Abbot of Bec, he already owes a feudal allegiance to his Norman overlord: 'an earthly prince to whom I owe submission', and he cannot 'cast off my allegiance to my prince without his permission'. According to the later papal position such feudal allegiance or submission concerning 'temporal' possessions was acceptable.

So, while Eadmer's account does emphatically focus on an aspect of the issue which would become crucial only several years later, the dispute over 'investiture' is clearly made distinct from the question of whether Anselm actually wanted to become Archbishop or not. But this is not for Eadmer primarily a matter of judging Anselm's 'sincerity'. A more interesting question about the passage as a whole is how far Eadmer is on Anselm's side or that of the bishops. There is no doubt that he was an ardent admirer of Anselm, and we will see why he might definitely have wanted Anselm to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Yet Eadmer very powerfully puts the cases both for and against Anselm's refusal. Arguably, what the complete text indicates is not simply an issue of Anselm's sincerity or Eadmer's own preferences but a structural problem which underlies Eadmer's whole *oeuvre*.

Anselm's argument emphasises the two-fold nature of authority:

> think of the church as a plough, as the Apostle says: 'You are God's husbandry; you are God's building'. This plough in England had two oxen, outstanding above all the rest, drawing the plough by ruling, and ruling by drawing the plough. That is, the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The one by human justice and sovereignty, the other by divine doctrine and authority.

So even the compromise suggested by the bishops is unacceptable: 'Do you attend to God for us and we will manage your worldly business for you.' For them to manage the 'worldly affairs' while Anselm concentrates on the spiritual might seem an attractive resolution, but only if it were simply a matter of Anselm personally preferring to spend his time praying. The more closely one reads, it is evident that Eadmer is not just recounting an event but probing a problem.

nova res

There is already a significant ambiguity in what Eadmer's text says about the issue which is to be ostensibly central to his whole narrative and the reason given for Anselm's two exiles. In the preface to the *Historia Novorum* Eadmer writes, concerning the eventual conflict between Anselm and the two Kings, William Rufus and Henry I (R1, B2):

> This very issue was seen to be a new thing (*nova res*) in our period, and from the time at which the Normans began to rule in England, not to speak of any prior time, was unheard of amongst the English. Indeed from the time that count William of Normandy subjugated this land for himself by conquest no one in that land had been made a bishop or abbot before Anselm who had not first become a man of the King, and from his hand had accepted investiture as a bishop or abbot through the bestowing of the pastoral staff, except two bishops, that is Ernesto and Gundulf. Therefore this practice, as contrary to God and to canon law, Anselm wished to abolish, and through this to rectify any injustices stemming from it, and so he made himself unacceptable to the King and was obliged to go into exile from the land. There were several other causes of this exile as the sequence of events will clarify.

Eadmer then back-tracks to clarify what he means by the issue being a 'new' one. He begins by characterising the relation between Archbishop Dunstan and King Edgar, several decades before the Norman conquest:

> While the most glorious King Edgar reigned, and the whole realm of England was governed diligently with sacred laws, Dunstan, prelate of

> Canterbury, a wholly virtuous man, directed the whole of Britain by the application of the Christian law. Under his influence and counsel King Edgar was himself devoted to God; so that when faced with foreign forces on every side, he fought them, with indomitable courage, conquered them, and kept them under control. England enjoyed peace and tranquil days throughout the land so long as she deservedly benefitted from the bodily presence of the King Edgar and father Dunstan.

This is precisely the idealised situation invoked by Anselm in his argument against the bishops:

> This plough in England had two oxen, outstanding above all the rest, drawing the plough by ruling, and ruling by drawing the plough. That is, the King and the Archbishop of Canterbury. The one by human justice and sovereignty, the other by divine doctrine and authority.

This functional division of powers and mutual co-operation between King and Archbishop is also described by Eadmer as obtaining after the Norman conquest between William I and Archbishop Lanfranc. On one occasion Lanfranc is even described as making a crucial decision thanks to a posthumous intervention by St Dunstan himself in a vision.

Whether King and Archbishop can appropriately collaborate is not however the same issue as whether the King can 'invest' the Archbishop, so when Eadmer writes that 'This very issue was seen to be a new thing (*nova res*) in our period,' is he claiming that the issue of investiture had never caused any problem prior to the Normans but that the Normans had somehow now made it into a problem? On the one hand, he indicates that William the Conqueror had simply continued a custom which had obtained prior to the Norman conquest, but on the other he also implies that this was one of what he calls the *nova res*, the new things, which the Normans had introduced (R10, B10):

> Since William wanted to observe in England those usages and laws which his predecessors and he himself had followed in Normandy, in this way he installed bishops, abbots, and other dignitaries throughout the entire land, of whom it would be regarded as inappropriate if they had not been obedient in everything to his rulings, leaving aside any other consideration, and if any of them for the sake of whatever earthly consideration dared to raise any opposition against him, given that it was well known to everybody who they were who had been elevated to these roles. And so all business whether divine or human waited upon his say-so. Since much of this has been recognised by only a few people, I want to set down some of those innovations (*nova*) which he instituted throughout England, reckoning that it is necessary to know

about such matters in order to make sense of those issues for the sake of which I have undertaken to write this account. So he would not suffer anyone in his entire dominions to recognise the duly constituted apostolic pontiff of the city of Rome except on his instructions, nor to receive any letters on any matter unless they had been shown to him beforehand. He would not allow the primate of his kingdom, that is the Archbishop of Canterbury, if he was presiding over a general Council of the bishops, to approve any statutes or prohibitions unless they were acceptable to the King and had been approved by him.

Martin Rule argues from this passage that the real 'novelties' – implied by the title *novorum* – were not investiture or even homage but these other matters, which he claims were introduced by William the Conqueror in Normandy and then exported to England. But they were not 'ancient' customs, either Norman or Anglo-Saxon, but simply '*consuetudines*', a term not implying anything about antiquity or tradition, any more than the meaning of 'customs' in the phrase 'Customs & Excise'. According to Rule's interpretation, they were indeed Norman and new to England, but while they had not been an issue between William I and Lanfrance, they were now between William II and Anselm.

Again, however, I am not primarily concerned with whether Rule is right or whether Eadmer's account is historically accurate, but with what Eadmer is doing as a writer of 'history' and whether there is indeed a further dimension to the argument, not yet made explicit.

Notice particularly William's argument in that long exchange with Anselm. William pleads that he, the King, might literally go to hell: 'I am convinced that I shall so perish if I end my life holding the archbishopric in my own hands.' This could simply be a reference to William Rufus holding the lands and assets of the archbishopric while the seat was vacant, an established practice which was the king's main financial motivation for delaying any archiepiscopal appointment for four years.

But we should also notice exactly what had, according to Eadmer, triggered the illness which finally induced William to agree to approve the delayed appointment at all. Immediately prior to the long passage already quoted we have the following exchange. A courtier has suggested that Anselm would be the best choice for the vacant archbishopric, though Anselm is of such holiness that he would have no such ambitions for himself. (R30, B31)

The King said derisively, "Not even the archbishopric of Canterbury!" The other replied, "that is absolutely the last thing he would wish, in my opinion and many others too." At which the King jeered that Anselm would clap his hands and even his feet and dash to embrace the chance, had he the slightest belief that he would actually aspire to it. He added, "But, by the Holy Face of Lucca" – for that was his habitual

> oath – "for now neither he nor anyone else is going to be archbishop, except myself." Even as he said this, a violent sickness struck him and forced him to take to his bed, and worsening day by day nearly reduced him to breathe his last.

The obvious reason for the prompt and presumably divine intervention is because what is unacceptably at stake in William's remark is not a mere lack of co-operation between the two great offices of the land, King and Archbishop, but potentially the opposite: a complete conflation of the two functions, such that 'neither he nor anyone else shall be archbishop except myself.'

In other words, God does not intervene over the issue of 'investiture' as such, but concerning what is dangerously latent here: the possibility of the King displacing or replacing not just the Archbishop but even the Pope himself. The bishops had claimed:

> you must know that every disturbance, every oppression, every crime, which from now on will befall England, will be blamed upon you, if today you do not prevent them by taking up this pastoral care.

Anselm had counter-predicted:

> When therefore, after I have been crushed, and there is none of you who will dare to oppose the King in anything, then without doubt he will not hesitate to trample on you in whatever way he chooses.

It is Anselm who, as Eadmer's narrative unfolds, is vindicated. As Eadmer writes later (R59, B61):

> The King congratulated himself, hoping that Anselm would either, having repudiated the Pope, remain in the kingdom with his reputation in ruins, or, keeping to his allegiance, would by the logic of his position be expelled out of the kingdom. He preferred the latter, above all because he desired to deprive Anselm of exercising any authority over the Christian church. For he always took the view, as I say, that it undermined his entire royal dignity if anybody at all in his whole kingdom, even in matters concerning God, could be said did not exercise their power through him.

Eadmer is here clearly attributing motivations to the King, not as a merely personal ambition but as a constitutional principle. Even after the change of ruler to the initially more amenable Henry I, the final crunch will come when Henry too demands that Anselm agree to this most fundamental 'novelty' (R84, B87):

> he wishes and commands either that with the promise of a solemn oath you will never again appeal to the chair of Saint Peter or any representative of his in any case whatsoever brought against you, or that you leave this land with all possible speed.

The issue of whether royal power is superior to that of the papacy had been implicitly present when Anselm first agreed to accept the archbishopric, since he had insisted that his personal allegiance had already been given to one of the two contending Popes at the time, while William claimed that he as King had not yet chosen between them. The implication is that the Pope's authority, in England at least, is dependent upon the King's decision to recognise a particular Pope. However, while the question of 'which Pope?' was explicit, the issue of 'which King?' was also in play. After all, there had also been a change from an 'English' king to a 'Norman' King.

I want to suggest that, from Eadmer's perspective, the issue of investiture or even homage is not a matter of old English customs which he might support or new Norman usages which he does not, or even the problem of a change in papal policy, since by the time he completed the *Historia Novorum* that issue had in any case been settled. He can therefore write his account while skilfully fudging how far Anselm had in 1093 specifically conformed or not to the (later) papal position. Neither does Eadmer see the conflict as essentially arising because a bad king has replaced a good king, or because William II is a raging bull and Anselm is a weak sheep. Or even because there are two popes, a situation which leaves papal policy uncertain and disputable. Nor is his history in the end primarily concerned with a struggle between king and pope.

These various interpretations are how English historians have tended to read Eadmer, as dealing with what Southern calls 'a theme of some magnitude and a certain elevation of view', specifically that of a conflict between Church and State as opposed powers. Indeed, Eadmer's *Historia Novorum* has frequently been treated primarily as a text which feeds into long-running and often tedious polemical debates about the English stance towards the ecclesiastical authority of Rome, even as involving a kind of anticipatory battle over the Royal Supremacy itself, which was to characterise the later Henrican Reformation in England. At other times, the issues raised by Eadmer have been seen as concerned with the danger of a monarchical tyranny. Or the relations between any form of national power and the possibility of a trans-national legal or even moral authority. It may have been those issues which prompted John Selden to publish the first printed edition of Eadmer's *Historia novorum* in 1623.

But did Eadmer perhaps see it all somewhat differently? We need to know more about Eadmer.

*

In the Introduction to his edition of Eadmer's writings in the Rolls series, Martin Rule writes, in his stately Victorian prose (p. cii):

> That one, if not both, of [Eadmer's] parents was English there can be no doubt; and the way in which he speaks of the friendship of his nephew Haimo with a 'noble man, a fine soldier, well-known among many parts of England by the name of Humphrey' invites the inference that he was a man of family. The name Haimo, born by his sister's son, would seem to point to one of the many matrimonial alliances which were concerted between the conquerors on the field of Senlac and the daughters of the conquered; and the fact that Humphrey lived near to Canterbury strengthens the conjecture that Haimo's parents were settled in that neighbourhood.
>
> Nothing, surely, could be more probable than that the child of a tenant of one of the archiepiscopal estates within a short distance of Canterbury should be devoted to religion, if anywhere, in the monastery of Christ Church. Nor is it unlikely that the recipient of Lanfranc's bounty, whom Eadmer mentions in his memoir of that prelate [*see below*], should have been the mother of our author, for the incident which he records cannot have been a topic of general conversation, particularly in a cloister, even after the obligation to silence might have been supposed to be removed by Lanfranc's death. In which case Eadmer's mother must have lived at no considerable distance from the primatial city, for she seems to have gone thither at least six times a year.
>
> Eadmer's silence about the name, the character, and the career of his father can scarcely be used for argument, or even for conjecture, but it is more consistent with the theory that Eadmer had no recollection of him than with any other. Can it be that Eadmer's father was one of the theigns who held of the see of Canterbury, one condition of his tenure being service to the Crown in the event of invasion, and that he died on the field of blood? And if so what can be less unlikely than that his widow should be a pensioner on the kindness of Lanfranc, or that she should devote her infant son to religion at Christ Church, or that after an interval of anxiety and poverty she should view with satisfaction the alliance of her daughter with the Norman knight whom either Odo or Lanfranc had put into the estate in succession to her husband? Certainly her son's description of the woes endured by the Canterbury tenants under the rack rents inflicted on them by Renouf the Firebrand upon Lanfranc's death is just such as would be written by one whose own kith and kin had been among the sufferers.

After this extended chain of several inter-connected and increasingly rather shaky speculations, Rule gets to slightly firmer ground:

> An approximation to the year of Eadmer's birth may be made without great difficulty. He tells us that he had been nurtured from infancy at Christ Church, and may be assumed to have been sent thither at the age of seven years; he seems, however, to have had no personal recollection either of the great fire in 1067 or of Lanfranc's arrival in 1070. But, on the other hand, he was present at the translation of the body of St Dunstan, prior to the commencement of Lanfranc's Cathedral in April 1073, by which time he was *puerulus*. He must, therefore, have been born between the latter half of 1063 and the former half of 1065.
>
> In or about the April of 1079 Abbott Anselm of Bec, on his famous visit to Canterbury, found Eadmer, by this time *adolescentulus*, in the monks' cloister, where he took notice of him, not improbably because he was the youngest of the party. By the spring, then, of 1079 Eadmer had completed his 14th year, and we may feel sure we are not far from the truth in declaring him to have been born in the year 1064.

Overall, this account proposes a speculative but plausible social location for Eadmer, though more recent scholars argue that he was perhaps born somewhat earlier, nearer to 1060. The supposition that Eadmer's father may have been 'one of the theigns who held of the see of Canterbury, one condition of his tenure being service to the Crown in the event of invasion, and that he died on the field of blood' is at least congruent with a marked characteristic of Eadmer's writings: his considerable and explicit hostility to the Norman conquerors.

Rule rightly refers to Eadmer's 'description of the woes endured by the Canterbury tenants'. Several times in the *Historia Novorum* Eadmer seems to go out of his way to mention the injustices and depredations inflicted by the Normans since the conquest. In particular, for four years after Lanfranc's death in 1089 William Rufus had kept the Archbishopric vacant and had effectively put the estates of Christ Church up for sale. Eadmer writes (R26, B27):

> You could see on a daily basis, in despite the religious status of God's servants, the most utterly depraved of men, extorting the King's revenue, rampaging through the precincts of the monastery with harsh and menacing looks, barking orders everywhere, uttering threats, making a great show of their domination and utter power. What great scandals, disputes, disorders, grew out of all this, it is painful even to remember.

Even under 'the great Duke William', the Conqueror himself (R124, B129):

> When even the great William first took over this land, many of his men, applauding themselves for such a great victory, assuming that everything should submit to their desires and pleasures and be subject to them, not only the property of the defeated but the very matrons and virgins, where they tried to take advantage, began to go crazy with forbidden lust.

When William Rufus is raising funds for his war in Normandy Eadmer describes it thus (R171, B183):

> In the collection of this money there was no sign of respect for piety or misery in the collectors, but cruel and inhuman exactions were imposed upon everyone, as those who came from there gave us first-hand reports. Then you would see, as they assured us, those who simply had nothing at all to give were either forced out of their homes or even the very doors of their houses ripped off, leaving them exposed to even further plunder, or thrown out of their wretched dwellings and reduced to extreme poverty, or afflicted and tortured with one misery after another. Even against those who were seen actually do have something, new and devious confiscations were devised, and so, since they did not dare to bring a case against the King in their own defence, having had everything taken from them, they sank into a grinding hardship.

At various times, Eadmer also implies that the Court of William Rufus is practising sodomy, and he even accuses the King of scandalously forcing a Jew to recant his conversion to Christianity in return for payment from the convert's irate Jewish father (R48, 50, 100). One significant accusation is left till late in the text: Eadmer eventually ascribes to one of the persistent Norman villains of his narrative, the Count of Meulan, the overall driving motive that he 'had no love for the English and could not bear that any one of them should be preferred to any position of dignity in the church.' (R192, B205)

We can interpret these motifs as indicating Eadmer's self-identification as an Anglo-Saxon with a considerable resentment towards the Norman conquerors. His concern for the pre-Norman Anglo-Saxon world is clear from various of his writings. In his first book, a life of the Anglo-Saxon Saint Wilfrid, he recounts how he and another Canterbury monk, Osbern, tried to find in the remains of the monastery long after the fire of 1067 the original graves and if possible any surviving relics of the old Anglo-Saxon saints once buried there. Eadmer and Osbern between them composed lives of several pre-Conquest saints, including Dunstan, Wilfrid, Oda, Oswald, and Alphege. Eadmer also composed three hymns in honour of St Edward the Confessor while Osbern may have composed a liturgy for St Alphege. As a child oblate in Christ Church in the 1070s Eadmer would have been taught by Ernulf who was later, as Abbott of the Rochester

monastery, responsible for the preservation of the unique collection of old English laws now known as the *Textus Roffensis*. A version of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle* was still being continued at Canterbury after the conquest and there is a plausible case that Saint Augustine's Abbey provided a focus for resistance to the Norman occupation, including – just possibly – the making of the Bayeux Tapestry with its subversive and satirical undercurrents. Eadmer's *Life of Dunstan* ends with a passage prophetically referring to the conquest which was to come:

> Moreover the misery which after his death has taken over the whole of England and in taking it over has destroyed it, is sufficiently obvious in the chronicles and in our own tribulations without my saying so. And so I don't see why I should write about it, since without a word being written the thing itself is sufficiently evident and nobody could possibly not see the very real misery in this place. What the end of all this or when it might occur I simply don't know, but I doubt if I am very far from knowing that everything which God has done to us he has done in complete justice because we have sinned against him and we have not obeyed his commandments. Because of which, what is to be said or done, by human effort or considering every course of action, I have no idea, except that in humility of heart God is to be appealed to, that he should manage things for us in such a way that he glorifies his name and acts towards us according to the depth of his mercy and through the merits and intercession of our most blessed father Dunstan, who predicted these events, and would save us by his wondrous works. And whether you, good Lord, and omnipotent God, in some way on account of your immense mercy you will do this, or on account of your inscrutable justice you will not do it, may your name God of Israel be blessed for ever. Amen.

It would be possible to elaborate a reading of Eadmer's support for Anselm against the new line of Norman kings as a strand in an overall anti-conquest attitude. There was, nevertheless, an ambivalence in Eadmer's overall response to the Norman victory of 1066. He recounts a claim made by 'the French' that so many Norman soldiers were killed in the Battle of Hastings that it could only have been divine intervention which ensured the defeat of the English, and he attributes God's wrath to the breaking of his oath by king Harold. In his life of Dunstan Eadmer sees the fire of 1067 as punishment for the cathedral accepting the burial of the illegitimate son of Harold and for the luxurious living of the monks. It is worth noting, moreover, that Eadmer consistently refers to himself in the less noticeably Anglo-Saxon form of 'Edmer'.

In particular, Eadmer must have had a mixed response to the impact of the new Norman order upon the Canterbury monastery itself. In 1070, with the buildings still almost entirely in ruins from the great fire of 1067, the

new Norman ruler, William I, appointed Lanfranc as Archbishop of Canterbury. Though not a Norman by birth, Lanfranc had made his reputation as the prior of Bec and as the Abbot of Caen, both prominent Normandy foundations. In an impressive and very Norman display of drive, energy and ruthlessness, Lanfranc had overseen the rebuilding of the entire monastic and cathedral complex. Within six years Canterbury cathedral had been almost totally reconstructed, with its previous ground plan now replaced by a version of Lanfranc's church at Caen: a long nave, a transept or crossing, a choir, and even its stone now imported from Caen quarries. Indeed, the young Eadmer would have witnessed Lanfranc's decision to replace part of his own memorable building efforts by an even more expansive replacement as the monastic community rapidly increased.

So, conquering enemies though the Normans were, their new regime provided substantial benefits to Eadmer's own monastic community: from living in ruins the brethren had moved into brand new quarters; from struggling through the divine services in the shell of a burnt-out and perhaps mostly wooden church, they were now celebrating the liturgy in an impressive stone choir, with a huge new nave stretching back probably to the present west door. However, not just the buildings had been transformed. As part of the overall policy, the English monks of the establishment had been partly replaced. Lanfranc's increased numbers included monks imported from Normandy, so that the composition of the Christ Church monastic community seems to have shifted from largely native, even local, brethren to comprise a not always harmonious mix of Anglo-Saxons and Normans. Many of the Norman monks were from Lanfranc's own previous monastery of Bec.

Yet Eadmer largely approved of Lanfranc himself, his own first head of the monastery (R14, B14f):

> Indeed, in his treatment of the monks of this church, how good, how attentive, how generous, he showed himself to be can be illustrated to some small extent by the fact that he was able to make sure that even the parents and the family of the brethren were assisted so that they would be spared the affliction of poverty. And, what you might find even more wonderful, he made it his practice not to wait until he was asked to intervene, but with the most heartfelt pity, in every way, he would offer whatever would be of the most assistance for as long a time as was needed.

Eadmer may have had specific personal reasons. The incident alluded to by Martin Rule in the passage quoted earlier is the following:

> An example : a certain member of this community was accustomed to accept from father Lanfranc thirty shillings once a year for the sake of his mother. On this occasion the monk was given five shillings from the thirty, because they were donated in instalments, on Lanfranc's

instructions. They were wrapped in a cloth and while he was talking to his mother he discreetly, as he thought, put them into her hand. But she with her mind on other things, didn't realise what her son had done, so the coins were spilt, and mother and son parted from each other. Afterwards the mother inquired of her son, wanting to know what had happened about the money which she had hoped he would have given to her. Taken aback, he told her to come and see him. And hearing what had happened he was extremely distressed, not only because of the loss which his mother had suffered, but lest the Archbishop learning of his carelessness would be angry at him and that he would have fallen out of his good books. Meanwhile the good Father, coming into the cloister, sat down there as he usually did, and noticing that the brother on returning from the conversation with his mother seems sad, discreetly asked, when everyone else was at a distance, the reason for his sadness. He listened, and with that wonderfully kind expression towards those who were troubled, he replied: "And is this why, my dearest son, you are so downcast? Those coins God has directed and assigned to someone else, who perhaps is in more need of them than your own mother. Keep silent, and make sure you don't talk about it to anyone. And so that this business will not weigh too much upon your spirit, instead of those five coins I will direct that seven be given to you today for your mother to have. But as I told you, see that nobody knows about it." That was the way he had of giving, so that the gift would be given gladly and nobody would be allowed to know of the gift or of the person who was the giver.

Eadmer's skill as a narrator is again evident. We are almost inevitably drawn to speculate that the 'one of the brethren' might well have been the teenager Eadmer himself, not only writing what he has 'seen with my own eyes and myself heard' but implicitly introducing himself into a story which highlights the merits of Lanfranc.

On the other hand, not only did Lanfranc impose a new version of the Benedictine Rule, his revised *Constitution*, replacing the version associated with Dunstan. He tried to change, even to extirpate, the traditions of the old monastery. Eadmer in his *Life of Anselm* tells of how Lanfranc intended to excise from the Christ Church liturgical calendar the feast-days of several Anglo-Saxon saints, including even Dunstan and Alphege. Lanfranc argued in the case of the latter that this famed Archbishop of Canterbury was not a martyr for the faith which the monastery claimed him to have been, since the cause of Alphege's death had only been his refusal to authorise payment of a ransom to liberate him from the Vikings who had captured him in yet another raid on Canterbury.

*

enter Anselm

At this point both Anselm and Eadmer enter the story. According to Eadmer, on that first visit to Christ Church in 1079 mentioned by Martin Rule, Anselm, then visiting as prior of Bec, was impressively sympathetic (*Life*, edited Southern, p. 50, my translation) :

> having been received into the fellowship of the monks, he was amongst them as one of them, spending several days with them, and every day either in the chapter house or in the cloister, expounding such wonderful aspects of the life and way of monks as had not been heard of before this time, with eloquent reasonableness. Privately also at other times he worked with those who were of a more serious disposition, putting to them deep questions concerning sacred and even secular texts, and expounding solutions. At that time I myself was rewarded with coming to the notice of his holiness and in a way suitable to my unworthiness as only a youngster I was then able to share in his blessed friendship in no small way.

The *Life* then continues with a long account in a chapter (Book I, ch. xxx) entitled 'The conversation between Anselm and Archbishop Lanfranc about the holy martyr Elphege, and its result.' In this account, it was Anselm, as both a one-time favourite pupil of Lanfranc and his successor at Bec, who persuaded Lanfranc to rescind his decision to exclude Alphege from the monastic calendar. Anselm argued that since Alphege was clearly willing to die at the hands of the heathen for a lesser cause, that of protecting his people from being impoverished to pay his ransom money, the saintly Archbishop would certainly have been willing to die in the greater cause, that of defending Christianity itself. Whatever the merits of Anselm's persuasiveness, Lanfranc was won over. As, clearly, was Eadmer. Fourteen years later, that visiting Lombard from Normandy was appointed Archbishop of Canterbury and Eadmer became what we might today call his personal assistant, accompanying Anselm on his various difficult and lengthy travels, and attending with him high-level meetings across Europe. Anselm obviously inspired enormous affection and loyalty in his English personal assistant and the *Historia Novorum* tells the tale of their journeyings together.

From that very first encounter, Anselm is even more acceptable to Eadmer than Lanfranc and is perhaps even seen as rather less of a 'Norman'. Moreover, Eadmer's fellow Anglo-Saxon monk Osbern had once been sufficiently unruly, perhaps arising from his commitment to the heritage of the pre-Norman monastery, that Lanfranc had sent Osbern into exile to Bec and put him under the supervision of Anselm, who not only befriended Osbern but effected a sufficient change in his behaviour that he was sent back to Lanfranc with a warm commendation from Anselm.

It is plausible therefore to suggest that in Eadmer's eyes by 1093 Anselm was the ideal candidate to become Archbishop of Canterbury. Not only would Eadmer have agreed in large part with the arguments of the assembled bishops clamouring for his appointment, which he ventriloquises in his account, but he also had the specific motivation that Anselm was the only person who might reconcile the two camps within the monastic community at Christ Church itself. Anselm would appeal both to those like Osbern and Eadmer who wanted to honour the old English ways and also to those Norman monks who had previously been at Bec, Anselm's own monastery. From that perspective, in 1093 Anselm was about to be appointed, in Eadmer's eyes, not only as the Archbishop of Canterbury but above all as the titular Abbot of Christ Church. The peculiar Anglo-Saxon tradition was that the Archbishop of Canterbury was also the head of the Christ Church monastery and was indeed supposed to be formally elected as such by the monastic community. The Prior was his day-to-day deputy. Anselm's appointment would have been, for Eadmer, the overwhelmingly desired solution. Except for a problem, or two.

office

Let us return to Eadmer's dramatic account of the day Anselm was chosen as Archbishop. Remember that Southern emphasised the question of whether Anselm was sincere in his protestations that he didn't want the appointment, or even whether, as in Vaughn's counter-argument, he was actually only too hypocritically ambitious for it.

The extraordinary scene clearly enacts the traditional motif of reluctance to take high office (the Speaker of the House of Commons is still ceremoniously 'dragged' to the Speaker's chair) but in Eadmer's account the sheer energy and persistence of Anselm's refusal goes much deeper than mere ritual convention or pretence. Eadmer's Anselm almost frantically deploys the techniques of both a rhetorician's persuasion and a preacher's parable to sustain his case, though the text also registers the force of the arguments against his refusal.

Eadmer can eloquently present both sides of the argument but the underlying problem as emphasised by Eadmer is that Anselm does not want to be involved at all in *this kind* of public office or responsibility. Even when he was first made a prior (and Anselm himself must have told Eadmer this, since it was before Eadmer knew him), Book I, chapter xii of the *Life* recounts 'How the Archbishop of Rouen ordered him to persevere in the office of prior and not to refuse a greater office if it were put upon him.' Again, after he becomes Archbishop and the quarrel over investiture erupts, Anselm's preferred response is simply to resign. He writes to the Pope (R93, B97):

> It is impossible for me to conform myself to such a life as this, or to save my soul in such an episcopate, both from the very character of the matters I have spoken about, and from my own incapabilities of many kinds, of understanding, of character, of nature, and of age, and this is the core of my plea, to make which was the whole purpose of my coming to you, that, as you desire God for my soul and my soul for God, you will apply your fatherly and apostolic piety which lives in your heart to release my soul from the enchainment of such servitude and restore to it the liberty to serve God in peace..

Both these attempts to avoid or resign might be seen simply, or uncharitably, as acts of cowardice, as a refusal to live up to his ecclesiastical responsibilities. During Anselm's second exile, as narrated in Book IV of *Historia Novorum*, Eadmer even includes two forceful letters from English bishops severely reproving Anselm for cowardice in choosing exile rather than standing up to the King (R160 B170; R167, B178).

Yet in Eadmer's account Anselm's motivation goes deeper than cowardice and is fundamentally different. Eadmer makes this clear, in a characteristically indirect way, by the specific anecdotes he chooses to tell. Again, it is the details of the text which are significant. Consider this moment from the journey to Rome as told in the *Historia Novorum* (R95, B98):

> Coming down from Lyon on the Tuesday before Palm Sunday we arrived the following Saturday at a village called Aspera [Aspres-sur-Buech]. When we had received hospitality and refreshment there, it was the view of the father that it was more fitting that we should join the community of the monks which lived together in that village rather than spend the night among the villagers, bearing in mind the rule of the monastic order, and because the offices of night and day were soon to happen [for Palm Sunday]. And so a request about this was sent to the monks and they promptly gave their assent. We presented ourselves as just three monks who were asking for this, that is the lord and father Anselm, the aforesaid Baldwin, and myself who writes this, brother Eadmer. We went therefore as if we were all equal with nobody exercising any authority as our father over the others.
>
> When therefore the monks were talking with us as pilgrims in the evening and were inquiring where we had come from, we replied that we had journeyed from the French regions and intended if God so allowed it, to travel as far as Rome. But they said: "In no way should you attempt that. On the route that you propose to take no one in a monk's habit is able to pass without being taken and subjected to considerable ill-treatment. That's why the Archbishop of Canterbury hearing about this took a wiser counsel. He had proposed, so it is said, to travel to Rome and present his own case there, and got as far as

> Piacenza. When he learned about the danger of carrying on along that road he changed his mind and is now delayed at Lyon." Baldwin replied: "He made a good choice; but we, because we are constrained by our service to God and in obedience to our spiritual father to go ahead, as much as we are allowed to, led by the Lord, we will have to make progress. Whenever we can't proceed any further, saving our obedience we will turn back." "May the good Lord," they said, "lead you on the way." So after we had celebrated the night and day offices among them, we resumed our journey.

Eadmer presents Anselm as implicitly condoning brother Baldwin's deceptively casuistical way of avoiding the truth, since the exiled Archbishop deliberately seeks a kind of anonymity. Not simply as a practical ruse but also because at some level he really does not want to identify himself as the 'Archbishop of Canterbury' whom the conversation concerns.

This reluctance is even clearer in a variation upon this incident recounted in Eadmer's *Life*, Book II, chapter xxviii: 'How we came to Susa and were received by the abbot of that place; and how we were questioned about Anselm' (my translation):

> From here we came to Susa and presented ourselves to the abbot of the place. We were just three monks: our lord and father Anselm, Dom Baldwin, and myself, brother Eadmer, who writes this. We travelled as if we were equals, with no indication who was the superior of the others. So when we were asked by the Abbot who we were and where we came from we said little in reply. When he heard that some of us were monks of Bec, he put the question: 'I ask you, brothers, is he still alive, that friend of God and of all good men, Anselm, the abbot of that monastery and a man proven and acceptable in every religious community?' To this Baldwin replied: 'He has been carried away to an archbishopric in another kingdom.' 'So I have heard,' he said. 'But now, I ask you, how is he? Is he in good health?' 'Well now,' he replied, 'from the time he was made archbishop I haven't seen him at Bec; but they say he is doing very well where he is.' Then the abbot said, 'And I pray that he keeps that way.' Anselm hearing these things being said about himself, with his head hastily covered by the hood of his cowl, sat with his face downturned. For we didn't want to be recognised, lest the news of the coming of such a man going ahead of us would put us in some danger by our carelessness.

According to Eadmer, Anselm will not or cannot identify himself with the role of 'Archbishop of Canterbury', even with the name or title. He wants and persists in a kind of self-effacement. Anselm chooses to be ordinary, another 'brother', even anonymous. Eadmer selects another

moment, in a visit to the Papal court, when the Pope himself singles out Anselm and praises him. Eadmer recounts the Pope's gushing words and then comments (*Life*, II, ch. xxix):

> Anselm often used to hear these and many other things said about himself in his praise. And so he himself used to confess that he blushed not a little, since he recognised this himself not at all as who he himself was, or even as the kind of man he was talked about as being. Nevertheless he remained silent during such talk, considering it more fitting to say nothing in this way than to speak at all.

Anselm's claim cuts very deep: that 'he barely recognised himself as himself' — however one translates the exactly compressed *se talem apud se . . minime cognovit*. It was, perhaps, the basic reason why at one point he ordered Eadmer to cease his ongoing attempt at composing an account of him. Anselm, having discovered that Eadmer was keeping a biographical record, ordered him to destroy it and to desist. Eadmer admits that he did indeed destroy the draft document, but took care to make a copy first, and then did not actually write anything further until after Anselm had died. This admission was itself only added as the final page in the manuscript of the *Life* after Eadmer was instructed to include it by Anselm's successor as Archbishop of Canterbury (*Life* II, ch. lxxii).

Anselm's intervention, forbidding the draft 'life', has been interpreted as resulting in a fundamental change in the tenor of Eadmer's text. After that moment, it is claimed, Eadmer was no longer allowed the same kind of privileged acquaintance which informs the earlier chapters and he has to fall back upon merely compiling a set of documents and indeed truncating the scope of his account. There is perhaps a different or additional significance to that moment. In so far as Eadmer was by now increasingly aware that Anselm would do everything possible to avoid the role of Archbishop of Canterbury, that also implied that he might never in practice become the titular Abbot of Christ Church, which also meant that Eadmer's own preferred outcome had no future. The implications went even further, as Eadmer had retrospectively realised by the time he wrote.

Though Eadmer does not include it, and may not have known it until much later when he was perhaps responsible for collecting Anselm's letters, we might here cite a poignant letter from Anselm when he was Abbot of Bec to his mentor Lanfranc, already Archbishop at Canterbury. The letter, number 57 in Schmidt's edition, vol III, p. 171, is addressed: **,**

> To his lord and father, the reverend Archbishop Lanfranc: brother Anselm, in everything totally his:
> As the prophet Zechariah when recommending the authority of his prophecy repeats in almost every verse, *thus said the Lord*; so, in order to make clear who is speaking to whom and in what spirit, it pleases me

> that frequently the letters I send to your paternal highness have inscribed as their heading: 'lord and father' and 'in everything totally his'. For I do not say that I know how to make it real but I have formed in my mind a cypress tree so that whatever I am putting forward in beginning with that salutation, it will by the conclusion appear to have been borne out. Since therefore I so often write to you under that title, in querying I quibble and in quibbling I query why you never write back to me but to some 'lord and father' of yours whom I have never heard of, indicated by just the first letter of the alphabet. But if you are so writing to your servant and son, what you not have the power to erase by a negating opposition, why do you attempt to turn on its head by a relative contrary? Accordingly I pray that as often as you embark upon letters marked with your high dignity, either I should see to whom you are writing or alternatively not see to whom you are not writing.

Today this would be followed by a smiley icon. It is a strange and convoluted letter, with its Horace reference (*Ars poetica*, line 19ff) and logical in-joke, both playful and pained. Anselm's complaint is that Lanfranc, who had known him so well at Bec, 'never writes back to the person I know myself to be' but to 'someone who is not me.'

But who then was Anselm? A question which neither of Eadmer's two main texts could, it seems, by itself coherently answer.

avoidance

Eadmer had a related question, which we might pose as: 'What is an Archbishop of Canterbury?' The kind of working relationship Eadmer had admired in the teamwork of Dunstan with Edgar, and in a different way that of Lanfranc with William I, was clearly proving not applicable to Anselm. Anselm's prophetic warnings had been accurate. Not because he was yoked to an untameable bull. Anselm was simply not suited to be an Archbishop of Canterbury on the model of a Dunstan or a Lanfranc – and Anselm knew it. In his letter to Pope Urban, Anselm himself insisted that he is not competent to fulfil the role of Archbishop, and distances himself from it (R92, B96):

> Having already been four years in this episcopate, no fruit have I borne, but in immense and appalling tribulations of my soul I have lived an utterly useless life, so that every single day I have desired more to die out of England than to live there.

All this was surely the case. And Eadmer too must have already realised it. In the *Life* he writes of Anselm's earlier time as prior of Bec, in Book I, chapter xxvii, entitled 'In what way he was accustomed to conduct himself

in secular pleadings' :

> Having delegated negotiations involving the monastery to the care and attention of brethren whose probity and energy he was sure of, he concentrated continually on the contemplation of God, and the instruction, admonishment and correction of the monks.

This is a version of the unacceptable compromise offered by the bishops in 1093. But Eadmer goes further: he even presents Anselm as deliberately falling asleep in the middle of legal arguments or administrative business. It is easy to see why, as Eadmer registers, several monks at Bec actually 'hated' Anselm, if this was how he exercised his executive office as prior of Bec.

Eadmer also knows that Anselm has not even been a 'successful' abbot of Christ Church: he acknowledges that the Canterbury monks too had eventually turned against him. By the time he wrote *Historia Novorum* and the *Life* it was clear that Anselm had not effected a reconciliation between Normans and Anglo-Saxons within the Christ Church community, except perhaps to unite them against himself. Far from being Eadmer's ideal candidate, he had been, by some criteria, a disaster.

At least in the concluding sections of the *Historia Novorum* Eadmer makes it plain that he still wanted to maintain, for the sake of the Christ Church community, the old Canterbury tradition whereby Anselm as the Archbishop has precedence over the Archbishop of York and jurisdiction over the Abbot of the nearby rival establishment in Canterbury, Saint Augustine's abbey. But Eadmer knows that he, and Christ Church, cannot have the overall settlement he had once desired. If Anselm is to be abbot of the monastery it must be by becoming the Archbishop of Canterbury, but if he is not fit to be an Archbishop of Canterbury he cannot be the head of Christ Church either. Southern argued that there could be 'no half-way house' between Anselm wanting to be Archbishop or not. For Southern this was a matter of Anselm's sincerity. For Eadmer it was a structural problem demanding some kind of half-way house, but actually without a viable solution.

One might argue that both "Eadmer's Anselm" and Eadmer himself are conflicted by different dual models or conflations of roles. Eadmer's preferred Abbot is no good as an Archbishop of Canterbury and Anselm cannot face being Archbishop of Canterbury if it effectively involves being a kind of deputy king, primarily a political-ecclesiastical administrator. From Anselm's viewpoint he knew he was not fitted for that version of the role of Archbishop of Canterbury, even if, as Martin Rule demonstrates and Vaughn emphasises, Anselm came from a long-standing and politically very experienced ruling family in Lombardy. His dilemma may therefore have been based not on any actual personal incompetence but rather because he considered that the role of 'Archbishop' as defined and offered to him was not, finally, appropriate for anyone to undertake.

In Eadmer's text, it becomes increasingly clear that Anselm regards himself as primarily a monk, a teacher, a thinker. He is presented as, above any other activities, a man who thought, who considered alternatives, rehearsing them in his mind, thinking them through. It is one of the almost unprecedented achievements of Eadmer's writing that it makes continually vivid the connection between our human interest in Anselm and those large issues which concern historians, precisely by the device of regularly dramatising Anselm's process of decision-making, describing a kind of inner dialogue or deliberation which can be rhetorically articulated as speeches in a dispute. And Anselm was clearly good at it—which partly supports Vaughn's interpretation that he could have been a practised political manipulator.

Obviously, Anselm's lasting importance for us today does not primarily rest upon his more less failed role as Archbishop, whatever the historical significance of the controversies he found himself engaged in, but upon his work as a philosopher, as a thinker of undeniable stature. Above all, moreover, his philosophical originality lies not only in what he thought but in the way in which he thought, which was precisely as a form of self-dialogue, an argument with his own thought, with himself, a practice of what Plato called *dianoia*. Eadmer memorably tries to capture something of what was involved in this process of thinking in Book I, chapter xix of the *Life*, which we will consider elsewhere, when we reach the chapel dedicated to Anselm, though perhaps rather appropriately nobody now knows where Anselm is actually buried.

Yet there is an even more fundamental aspect to Eadmer's Anselm. His position is characterised not so much by a recognition of his own incompetence or simply by a personal reluctance to take up any post of responsibility, but rather by a principled repudiation of that form of responsibility, of that kind of power.

Consider again his actions as prior of Bec, in one of the law-suits unavoidable for the administrator of an important local institution. The passage quoted earlier continues (I, ch xxvii):

> However, whenever there was some major matter of business for the church which had to be handled, which it was thought inappropriate to conclude in his absence, then whatever was pending he would arrange in a timely and sensible manner and with even-handed justice. For he thought it quite appalling that anybody should seek to make a profit by some crafty action through which someone else would suffer a loss against the principles of justice. Hence he never tolerated that anyone be bamboozled in law-suits by any fraud on the part of his own lawyers, being convinced not to do to others what he would not have done to himself. Hence it followed that when he found himself trammelled in contested litigation, and his adversaries were constructing a detailed strategy which through ingenuity and

> sophistication would advance their case, while fraudulently undermining his, he would take no part in such practices, but to those willing to listen to him he would simply expound either the gospel, or some other scripture text, or offer some considerations on rightful customs. Often when there was no one even prepared to listen, he would gently retire into the sweet purity of his own heart, and simply compose himself to sleep. It not infrequently happened that when these subtle fraudulencies were put into operation, almost as soon as they were displayed before him, not as somebody who had just been sleeping but as somebody vigilantly alert and paying attention, he would promptly analyse them and take them apart. For the charity which envieth not, which doeth no evil, which seeketh not her own, flourished in him, and made obvious for him at a glance how things should be seen in the light of truth.

The emphasis here is that Anselm is not so much avoiding administrative chores as refusing to operate according to the adversarial procedures of litigation, the competitive struggle for advantage, the demand to win the contest. Again, one might sympathise with his monks, but it is this overall feature of his character that Eadmer's portrait consistently presents.

On this account, at the core of Anselm's unease with the worldly roles to which he found himself assigned was not only the positive attractions of prayer or philosophy but also a kind of fundamental repudiation, rooted in a horror of personal property, which was much more than a formal commitment to monastic poverty. As is made plain in Bk I, ch xxiii of the *Life*, entitled 'His great horror of having anything belonging to him':

> He had a horror of the very term 'private property' (*ad nomen proprietatis inhorruit*) and when he returned from a journey, for which special provision had been made for him, he made sure that everything be put back into the communal travel resources. Nor because of concern as to any deprivation he might experience for himself, did he ever refrain from supplying from his own allocation whatever was needed for everybody else. Nor is it surprising that after he had left the world he exhibited this behaviour towards his brethren, since, as he himself used to say, even when he was involved in secular life he felt the same love to those around him, so that if he saw anyone of his own class (*sui ordinis*) having less than himself he would freely supply their needs from his own abundance if at all possible. Indeed reason had already taught him then that all the riches of the world were created by the one Father of everybody for the common use of everybody, and in accordance with natural law there was nothing which belonged more to one person than to another.

This might be regarded, especially today, as rather too radical an extrapolation from the Benedictine commitment to 'poverty'. Nevertheless, a monastery as an institution did have possessions, not least rent-paying tenancies. In fact it was not because of royal opposition to the Pope over investiture but in order to retrieve and retain the landed estates of Christ Church that Anselm later, acting as Archbishop, threatened to excommunicate King Henry I. Moreover, his commitment to monastic obedience led to a variation of this practical contradiction, since Anselm was faced with a conflict between two opposing demands for 'obedience': from the King and from the Pope. Obedience was at the core not only of the Benedictine Rule but of the entire feudal structure of ascending hierarchies, both secular and ecclesiastical, and the 'investiture' issue was in part a conflict of competing obediences.

The third monastic vow, that of chastity, seems to have given Anselm little personal trouble, though some might regard his extravagant expressions of love and affection for his fellow monks as a form of celibate displacement. The rule of monastic chastity was in part a way of keeping estates in a monastery's ongoing possession, and Gregory VII's imposition of celibacy also upon the secular clergy was a component of an overall strategy for maintaining control over all ecclesiastical property, in its own way reinforcing the fundamentally economic conflict over lay investiture.

From a different perspective, it can be argued that the precise point of intersection between the secular and spiritual powers was located in laws concerning matrimony, inheritance, succession. Indeed, it was often emphasised that the Bishop himself was 'wedded' to his diocese, as in the references to Canterbury's 'widowhood' earlier. Crucially, again and again, in the case of Dunstan, Lanfranc, Anselm himself, the Archbishop of Lyons, and several popes, the ecclesiastically enforced moral rules and the Canon Law regulations concerning adultery, divorce, illegitimacy, even incest, not to speak of lust, clashed directly with the marital and extra-marital intentions and actions of ruling monarchs with an eye on ensuring appropriate dynastic alliances between states and securing preferred lines of succession for their regimes. Henry VIII was to join a long historical queue.

In another incident Eadmer emphasises how Anselm distanced himself not only from the legal practices of his society and from private possessions but from another core feudal structure. In his first direct confrontation with William Rufus there is a long and tense exchange which includes the following demand or request from the new Archbishop (R49, B50):

> 'There is another matter to which I want to see your energy applied, and a helping hand extended. A great many abbeys in England are left without pastors, which means that monks abandon their rule, drift into the self-indulgence of worldliness, and depart this life without confession. So I advise, beg, and admonish you to examine thoroughly

> into these matters, and in accordance with the divine will install abbots over these, lest through the ruin of the monasteries and the perdition of the monks you incur – which heaven forbid – damnation for yourself.'

William replies angrily:

> 'What business is that of yours? Are not the abbeys mine? You do what you please with your manors, but am I not to do what I please with my abbeys?'

This is a direct reversal by William of the distribution of landed possessions between church and state. Since the King was at that stage raising funds to wage his military campaign in Normandy, Anselm's sharp reply is quite startling:

> 'They are yours indeed to defend as their advocate and protector, but they are not yours to take over or devastate. We know them to be God's to provide his servants with their livelihood, but not to enable your expeditions and wars.'

Again, Anselm's stance might be regarded as radically undermining the very foundations of the entire feudal order, the possession of property in exchange for military service. Arguably, as Martin Rule recognises, William's position was equally radical: 'in claiming now no longer the *seignury*, but the absolute ownership of all the abbeys in his kingdom, he took a first bold step towards abolishing ecclesiastical property from end to end of England.' Yet even if Anselm here articulated almost a basic incompatibility between the church and military service he was again in a practical impasse. The Archbishopric of Canterbury was legally obliged to maintain its due quota of knights and men-at-arms whom Anselm must provide for the military campaigns of the King, and which he did indeed supply for the Welsh campaign when called upon.

On this reading of Eadmer's text, it is not simply that Anselm was unable to fit into the role of Archbishop of Canterbury as defined by the models of Dunstan and Lanfranc. Given such (attributed) views on law, property, and military power, Anselm simply did not fit as an individual into the whole social formation, even if as a reluctant prior, abbot, or archbishop, he was necessarily embedded within it. This self-effacing relation to power potentially eroded, and perhaps even suggested an alternative to, the dominant models of authority and power.

But he clearly could not operate as Archbishop of Canterbury by observing the alternative monastic template of power and responsibility embodied in the Benedictine Rule. Which both Anselm and Eadmer may well have seen as the crucial point of being a monk in the first place. Yet

how far is this an effect of Eadmer choosing to present Anselm in this way? And, we might also ask, how far did Eadmer's own views influence the actual stance of Anselm himself? Eadmer may have been a mere youth when they first met but it was as a mature adult that he accompanied Anselm on his travels and probably as a man approaching sixty that he composed his retrospective account. By then, it may have seemed wholly appropriate that their shared experience for so many years had been of exile, indeed of having no fixed place in the social order.

As a theological thinker, also, Anselm had not fitted into the received intellectual model of his time, and in that domain he did successfully invent alternative modes. As Lanfranc observed when Anselm submitted his treatise, the *Monologion*, to him, Anselm did not appeal to any 'authorities', did not construct his argument around quotations and citations from the Fathers of the Church, though he claimed that everything in his text could be found in St. Augustine. Nor did he anticipate the forthcoming developments in scholastic theology by organising his thoughts in an impersonally logical and systematic construction, but rather shaped them as variations upon meditative prayer. In this respect, Richard Southern sees Anselm as anticipating not the development of systematic theology in the 12th and 13th centuries but the much later 14th-century modes of semi-mystical theological exploration. Perhaps, however, his equally innovative attitude to issues of power, as registered by Eadmer, had to wait even longer for any realisation.

The Anselm depicted by Eadmer is even original as a 'saint', perhaps because, at some level of thought or anxiety, he is presented as so comprehensively uncertain of his own place and role that only in the internal dialogue with himself – or God – does he discover or construct who he is. In that process, Anselm created his distinctive and innovative genres of writing, particularly his prayers and meditations which perhaps revealed rather too much of himself for recognition as a merely plaster saint.

In some respects Anselm can even be seen as already anticipating Saint Francis of Assisi. One suspects that had that model been available Anselm might well have preferred being a studious Franciscan friar to being a Benedictine prior or, most certainly, an archiepiscopal administrator. Canterbury had to wait a while for it first Franciscan Archbishop.

unrealisable

What now of Eadmer? I have, obviously, been suggesting that "Eadmer's Anselm" may be substantially distinct from the actual Anselm and therefore that raising the question, for example, of Anselm's 'sincerity' may be somewhat beside the point. The question now has to be asked as to why or how Eadmer too came to construct his own original modes of writing. In

Eadmer also there was perhaps a degree of uncertainty about the relation between his own life and its assigned roles.

Eadmer experienced the impasses which centred on Anselm not as a dutiful formal chronicler for his Christ Church monastery, or as a disengaged national historian assembling his narrative account from previous sources, but as someone deeply and personally involved, engaged and puzzled, precisely because his own allegiance and preferences are both passionately firm and perhaps essentially unrealisable. He goes loyally into exile with a man who was formally both the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Abbot of Eadmer's monastery but who was effectively neither, however much Eadmer might have wanted him to become a combination of both.

The impact upon Eadmer of his extended exiles with Anselm is hard to over-estimate. From early childhood he had probably rarely ventured beyond the monastery's own lands, and perhaps largely stayed within the precinct itself. Yet in 1097 in his late 30s he finds himself travelling throughout Europe for several years, covering territory from Calais to Bari and back. He spends the first Christmas abroad at the enormous and powerful monastery of Cluny, with the largest church in Europe until the Renaissance Saint Peter's. He is a guest of the Metropolitan Archbishop of Lyon, stays for six months near Capua, witnessing the siege of the city, spends months in Rome as a guest of the Pope himself, and travels to the furthest tip of Italy for a Council which brings together hundreds of European and Byzantine dignitaries. The second exile of more than three years takes him again to Bec, Rome, and Lyon and through a further range of travelling experiences. Though Anselm and he might be housed in papal apartments and received with honour at wealthy Benedictine monasteries, Eadmer is nevertheless not travelling in a splendid cavalcade impressively suitable for an eminent ecclesiastic, but normally as an ordinary monk, one of three incognito figures walking the difficult roads, seeking food and hospitality along the way.

Presumably this overall experience gave him some new perspectives upon Canterbury and perhaps upon the nature of the European Catholic church itself. Christ Church Canterbury did not yet enjoy the importance it would assume after the cult of Becket, and certainly not the kind of recognition it would eventually acquire as the focus of a world-wide Anglican community. In the early twelfth century, Christ Church was relatively low on the scale of estimation and England itself only a relatively minor player on the European diplomatic and ecclesiastical map. Whatever Anselm's own status and reputation, for scholarship and saintliness, it must have been clear to Eadmer that his cause and plight were subject to precisely the machinations of the worldly power struggles which he had once hoped to avoid. It was perhaps not an edifying acquaintance with the nature of contemporary history.

Arguably, Eadmer emerged as the most impressive or at least the most intriguingly complex historian in Britain since Bede partly because the major models of writing which he had inherited also seemed inadequate or inappropriate to his particular ambivalent situation and overall experience. The numerous existing lives of saints and accounts of martyrdoms, including several by Eadmer himself, were written not primarily as 'historical' records but as texts to be reflected upon, as providing exemplars of christian virtue and heroism. The primary place to read them was not in the scholar's carrell but from the refectory reading desk, as 'spiritual reading' recited aloud during communal meals, or as part of liturgical celebrations of past models of holy living and dying.

Eadmer did eventually endeavour to write a saint's life of Anselm but it is a curiously half-hearted affair. We are left in no doubt that Anselm was an exceptionally good and admirable man but the usual trappings of sainthood are noticeably absent. Eadmer's *Life of Anselm* has remarkably little of the usual hagiographical clichés and there is only a handful of possibly miraculous events, mostly told at second-hand and none given total endorsement by Eadmer as indisputably miraculous. Even Eadmer's later appendix or supplement devoted to Anselm's *miracula* is characterised by a considerable degree of caution or even scepticism.

At the end of the *miracula* text there is a significant moment and though it is attributed to a younger fellow monk we can again suspect an indirect portrait of Eadmer himself, not least in the somewhat unconvincing over-insistence upon the community's devotion to Anselm:

> One of those who assumed the monastic habit after the death of Anselm … began to ask himself with what kind of certainty the brethren accepted the sanctity of the dead man. Wishing therefore to emulate the actions of those whom he revered after leaving the secular life he took steps to prostrate himself before the tomb of the father in the way the others did, but he hesitated between praying for Anselm or asking Anselm himself to offer prayers to God on his behalf. Having no-one fully to resolve this hesitation for him, he turned to the bosom of the grace of God, imploring that he for whom all ways of man are clear, and who makes holy as he is holy those who follow in their steps, would in some definite way reveal to him in what manner he should truly consider Anselm and in particular whether it was possible to regard him as able to intercede with God on behalf of others, or whether he was such that it was more appropriate that others should intercede on his behalf. He prayed once, and he prayed again. O marvellous goodness of God, what wonderful kindness, and true divine mercy: the man was not left languishing any longer in his hesitation, but as he had sought the truth with such piety, and might abandon his effort if overcome with tiredness at any longer delay, he was soon made worthy of an assured revelation as he repeated his prayer. He prayed

> for the second time and suddenly, as often happens, a gentle sleep closed his eyes. And there before him a book opened up, and in a shining light he saw written in superb letters SAINT ANSELM. And with his eyes opening he woke from sleep and he understood from the true name of father Anselm as written in the book of life that the prefix confirmed the sanctity which he had sought to be sure of.

It is a consoling apparition and surely a wish-fulfilling dream, announcing divine approval also for the author of a life of Saint Anselm, Eadmer himself, but a vision is hardly convincing proof of either success or sanctity.

mutation*s*

As for the received models of historical writing, Eadmer's work clearly does not conform to any traditional modes, though his own practice was to have some influence on later writers. One source for what we call history between Bede and Eadmer was a version of the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle continued by monks at Canterbury who must have been Eadmer's contemporaries. Its mode was to record – in a way wholly shaped by the concept of history as 'succession' – the notable events of each passing year.

In the *Historia Novorum* Eadmer does proceed more or less chronologically, but it is hardly a formal chronicle since it is arranged not by calendar years but by the conflicts in the life of his hero. There had been a few mediaeval written lives of individuals who, as we say, had 'made history', such as the life of King Alfred attributed to Asser or Notker's life of Charlemagne. However, Eadmer's two most significant writings are different from previous genres and arguably created a new way of responding to 'history' because for Eadmer his subject matter was not only a matter of the past to be recorded but of his own present, still to be understood, and that peculiarly problematic period he was himself living through.

In calling his text by the somewhat incongruous combination of *Historia* and *Novorum* he is drawing attention to the fact that his work is not concerned fundamentally with historical events, or even in a sense with past 'events' at all, even though 1066 might have been treated as a date comparable in importance to the 597 which shaped Bede's account. Eadmer's own pervasive presence in his text is not just as an eye-witness of 'events' but as someone actively living through the same experiences and dilemmas as his protagonist Anselm. It is also Eadmer's own life which is recorded, two intertwined lives which have changed, been transformed. Moreover, he writes two texts, the *Historia Novorum* and the *Life of Anselm*, not so much as complementary to each other but precisely as not fully congruent: the one won't quite 'fit' into the other. He cannot produce either a hagiographical 'life and miracles' or a chronicled 'life and times' since the times and the life are almost in principle incompatible, even irreconcilable.

Quite what Eadmer meant in the manuscript title by '*novorum*' is worth probing. In part, it is certainly a matter of the *nova res* introduced into England (*in Anglia*, says the title). But not just 'new things', novel customs, or recent specific events, but something much more pervasive. The Normans had conquered England in the one date now known to every schoolchild in Britain, 1066. As far as Canterbury was concerned this was not a single event or some distant alteration in the state apparatus, a transition of anonymous rulers in a court far away, some mere substitute of remote ruling personnel. Having a Norman-appointed Archbishop of Canterbury might not in itself seem especially significant, since many of the archbishops of Canterbury, as indeed the previous bishops of many dioceses in Britain over the centuries, had not been local or native-born. The Roman church deployed its personnel, like today's global corporations, wherever it thought appropriate to meet the needs of a long-lived supra-national organisation, and among the list of priors and archbishops in those two tablets at the end of the nave are many names that echo other cultures than those of these islands. But this occasion was different. This royal archiepiscopal appointment was not so much a contribution to an extended European christendom as the implementation of a decisively 'national' conquest. Lanfranc was implementing in the ecclesiastical sphere the Norman reforms which William was imposing in the political and social domains.

For Canterbury as a city, as well as the monastery and cathedral, 1066 had meant a major transformation. Fifty years before the Norman conquest, in 1011, Canterbury had been raided by those other Northmen, the Vikings (the occasion of Alphege's martyrdom) and not only had the cathedral been burned to the ground, together with the main monastic buildings, but the city too had been trashed. What partly signalled a 'new' moment was not just that the cathedral, after the 1067 fire, was again rebuilt and in a significantly different and unfamiliar style, but a new character was imposed upon the whole city. Fifty years after 1066, the conquering Normans were still visibly 'the enemy', as alien occupiers in a homeland that had been subjugated and transformed. Not only the new cathedral but also the local castles, at Canterbury and Rochester and Dover, were now manifest architectural signs of Norman power. And new formidable walls were now stretched around the entire city. But no longer to protect the inhabitants from a Viking raid. Rather to provide a fortress against potential local rebellion. The traditional land-holdings were now tabulated, reorganised and reassigned under the impact of the Domesday Book, another extraordinary example of the same driving energy and innovative imagination that Lanfranc had shown in his rapid rebuilding of the monastery and cathedral. The Normans were now a permanently occupying military power and Eadmer had spent almost his entire life growing up under those conditions. All this might indeed be 'new things' or the *nova res* brought by the Normans. Yet the sense of 'novorum' goes even further.

When he came to write the life of Anselm, Eadmer found a different term for what his 'historia' had been about. He writes in the preface to the *Life* :

> Since we have witnessed many transformative changes which have occurred and come together in England in our days which were quite unusual in the days of our predecessors, lest the knowledge of these changes should be entirely lost to our posterity, we had committed to the remembrance of writing a succinct selection of certain of these matters.
>
> *Quoniam multas et antecessorum nostrorum temporibus insolitas rerum mutationes nostris diebus in Anglia accidisse et coaluisse conspeximus, ne mutationes ipsae posterorum scientiam penitus laterent, quaedam ex illis succincte excepta, litterarum memoriae tradidimus.*

That is, he had first written the *Historia novorum,* and what Eadmer is still trying to get into focus, through his recounting of the time which he and Anselm had experienced together, is his sense that what he calls *mutationes* have been ongoing. But precisely what those 'mutations' have been, and still are unfolding, cannot be fully analysed or understood by Eadmer – except through focussing on the person of Anselm himself.

Eadmer offers a justification for writing the *Life* as well as the *Historia*, using a kind of division between what we might now too easily regard as a distinction between the 'public events' and the 'private life', but which Eadmer designates rather as 'well-known matters' which were 'open to the inspection of any contemporary' and those 'little known' involving Anselm's '*privatam conversationem*'. It is important to register that *conversatio* did not only mean 'conversation' but was a term used for the whole way of life of a monastic community. Eadmer writes:

> That work [the *Historia Novorum*] was mainly directed to what happened between the Kings of England and Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury. Designed not to damage the truth, it described in rough but serviceable prose what anyone wanting to know the plain history of those times would have been able to take notice of.
>
> But it did not include anything which could be seen to concern only Anselm's private conversation [*privatam conversationem*], or the quality of his way of life, or the appearance of miracles. And as it has pleased some of my community to persuade me to undertake this work, so that just as by my description of notable events for posterity, so by taking pains to describe what were hardly-known events, I would by this task provide some service for the future as much as for the present. Since I have taken the utmost care not to offend them, I have undertaken this work so as to cater to their wishes as far as I am able.

> So I have given this work the title *On the Life and Conversation of Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury* and with God's help I have endeavoured to so arrange matters that despite that other work which we first composed consisting in large part of the conversation of this same man, even though in its material it was arranged in the form of a self-contained narrative, nevertheless it will be seen that neither is the one in much need of the other, or the other of this, for the interdependent understanding of each. Nevertheless to those wanting to know the actions of this man, I would definitely say that neither this one without that one, nor that one without this one, can provide what is enough.

Characteristically, Eadmer, while highlighting the difference between literary forms, says that neither of the two works stands in great need of the other and yet immediately claims that a full understanding of either requires both. This is not, I suggest, a simple self-contradiction. Nor is it because each work neatly complements the other, but rather that reading them together provokes an understanding of how the 'well-known events' in one are implicitly at odds with the 'little-known events' in the other, and *vice versa*.

Eadmer's 'Anselm' does not simply represent or embody the kind of social or political changes which might be attributed to such an 'event' as the Norman conquest and occupation, but rather, precisely in *not* fitting into the feudal roles offered to him, exemplifies and enacts an alternative kind of change, a 'mutation', or at least the potential for a change which did *not* occur.

In so far as the admirable figure of Anselm is shown to be incompatible with the existing and newly reinforced structures of power and authority, Eadmer's endorsement or construction of that figure constitutes almost an awareness that those structures might themselves be open to a much more far-reaching change, that the very feudal hierarchies of state and church might themselves be susceptible to 'mutation'. And such a change enables almost a new kind of historical awareness, a sense of what constitutes historical change.

There had of course been variable relations between church and state before, and between cooperative or contesting individual office-holders, kings and clerics. But Anselm posed not some revised division of responsibility or new conflation of the old functions but a kind of demand for dissolution of received forms, in a mode essentially unamenable to the old terms. The relation in his case between the 'public' and 'private' or the institution and the individual was one of profound incompatibility with implications for both. According to Ducange, the great compiler of the standard dictionary of later mediaeval Latin usage, the term *mutatio* carried a sense of reciprocity, of two-way change, what the scholastics termed structural causality, or a different idiom would call dialectical change.

Consider some further aspects of Eadmer's own social situation, which Rule does not develop but which Eadmer might have registered for himself. Allowing the plausible suggestion that his father was a 'theign who held of the see of Canterbury, one condition of his tenure being service to the Crown in the event of invasion, and that he died on the field of blood', Eadmer would in such circumstances have presumably resented his father dying in a military campaign against the Norman conquerors. He may also have questioned his father's enforced recruitment to do so and the requirement that anyone born 'English' or Saxon would now have to fight on behalf of their new Norman overlords. He may even have found in Anselm not just a conventionally addressed 'Father Anselm' but a substitute for his actual father. Though he recounts Lanfranc's generosity towards a widowed mother, if it was indeed Eadmer's mother, it may have occurred to him that the only reason Lanfranc was able to offer her extra money was because, precisely as Archbishop of Canterbury, Lanfranc was now in possession, by conquest, of the Christ Church estates. Eadmer had depicted the oppression of the local population as a matter of foreigners behaving unjustly, but it was the possessions of the church itself which provided them with the opportunity. In telling how Anselm first offered the new King William II a gift of £500 towards his military expenditure, which was haughtily refused as insufficient, Eadmer makes it clear that only then did Anselm choose to donate the £500 instead to the alleviation of the plight of the church's own poverty-devastated tenants.

From the perspective of an Anglo-Saxon intimately supportive of a Norman-imposed Archbishop who resolutely declined to identify himself with that role, what Anselm's example provoked for Eadmer was a glimpse of a deeper issue than national resentment or the machinations of ecclesiastical and political power. Not whether the joint authority of king and church was viable, albeit even combined in a single Archbishop-King or King-Archbishop, nor whether the model of church and state cooperation which he retrospectively attributes to the moral authority of Saint Dunstan was recoverable. But the perhaps disturbing question whether an 'Archbishop of Canterbury' should be the administrator of church estates at all, let alone a stand-in for state power. Even perhaps whether a Pope should also cease to operate as largely a variation upon secular power. When the Pope seems to be almost abandoning Anselm, Eadmer castigates the papal curia for being bribed not just directly as individuals but also by the promise of an annual financial contribution to the papacy, the so-called Peter's Pence.

The example and attitude of 'Eadmer's Anselm' seems to question the appropriateness of an entire set of assumptions. Not just as a matter of Anselm's personal preferences but as reinforcing a drastic separation of, or even structural opposition between, the functions of church and of state

and, potentially, a quite different model of both. Eadmer can half-grasp this possibility because he desperately wants Anselm as abbot or father but not as 'Archbishop of Canterbury' if this means essentially a Norman magnate and ruler, and he wants Anselm's ideal of a monastic *conversatio* but not Lanfranc's ideal of the church as an efficiently administered legal corporation. Anselm's notion of the church is fundamentally at odds with the 'worldly affairs' as defined by the feudal military mode which so entirely characterised the Norman conquest.

The full implications or implementations of any such emerging attitude were perhaps not to be apparent for several centuries but are almost anticipated in the very person of Anselm. Anselm's conception of the monastic life (*conversatio*) as embodying the overriding criteria for evaluating behaviour could not finally co-exist with a state church content to accommodate quite other principles of power and career. Perhaps the only eventual resolution was indeed the dissolution of the monasteries, the appropriation of their estates, and one or other form of a radical transformation: either the state had to take control of the church or the church took control of the state.

A problematic that would eventually be traced through the English Civil War, the Thirty Years War, and beyond, and to entangle a line of future archbishops from Becket to Cranmer to Laud.

We can therefore probe again what the relation between Eadmer's two complementary yet opposing texts might be. It is clearly not as simple as saying that the *Life* concerns Anselm in his private or spiritual role, as monk, teacher, abbot, while the *Historia* gives us the political and ecclesiastical power struggles as the 'context' in which Anselm's public life as Archbishop was played out. Even if Eadmer himself perhaps doesn't fully view it this way, his two texts indicate not only how deeply problematic the connection between 'the life' and 'the times' was for both Anselm and for Eadmer himself, but also how the very structures of the social formation taken for granted by both might finally be seen as profoundly awry.

It is worth drawing a brief comparison with Thomas Becket. Given the various overall accounts of his life, we may know more or less 'what happened', but the puzzle remains of Becket's apparent identification first with the chancellorship and then – in an allegedly almost self-contradictory transformation, or *mutatio* – with the archbishopric, so that we can find ourselves wondering whether Becket's motivations were in effect subsumed into whichever function he was fulfilling, and thus in some respects constituted almost the opposite of Anselm's stance, and yet in some respects was also a variation upon it.

Henry II expected at least a Lanfranc-type cooperation in running the state. Becket's predecessor, Archbishop Theobald (also a product of Norman Bec), had already shown how to assemble a suitably trained cardre of ecclesiastical administrators, among whom Becket had been one, as

Theobald's archdeacon. But Becket was to become an admirer of Anselm: it was Becket who commissioned John of Salisbury's *Life of Anselm* which more or less paraphrased Eadmer. Since many historians still tend to share the presuppositions of what I call a feudal history attitude, their puzzlement at Becket's apparent transformation is partly shaped by a half-conscious reluctance to accept that someone might not actually share the ambitions or drives of the feudal elite which are so habitually represented as indubitable historical explanations of active personal motivations. Recall William Rufus's scorn for the very notion that Anselm might not have the ambition to want to grasp after the wealth of the archbishopric. Scepticism about Anselm's 'sincerity' may rest on a similar premise.

To some extent, of course, Becket certainly did not display Anselm's mentality: that the assassin knights could loot his private chamber of gold, silver, and jewels indicates that, for a start, his commitment to monastic poverty was hardly overwhelming. Nor, of course, was Hubert Walter's, as recorded in Gervase's list of his bequests to Christ Church. Anselm himself can certainly be regarded as even more puzzling than Becket, though to some today he can also appear far more appealing. Particularly if we have no personal investment in emulating the forms of ambition or the drive for territorial and other possessions which characterised the mediaeval dynastic agents, and especially if we are fairly passively content to recognise ourselves as living predominantly in an urban, or even suburban, equivalent of cyclical agricultural time, the daily and weekly round of work, at the service of a more or less local and limited family network, rather than being ardently consumed by limitless ambition to found a dynasty or control an empire – or even to write a historical masterpiece.

We might nevertheless also recognise ourselves as living through a contemporary form of historical 'mutation', and, as a relatively minor component of our overall make-up, be mildly concerned that our own passing time should in some way intersect with and contribute to 'historical' time, that in some small respect or other we might 'make a difference' to 'history', even though this may simply take the form of a suspended waiting for some opportunity or occasion to arise, as one's actual life is lived without too much apparent impact upon either historical time or national destiny. A not uncommon structure of feeling. I suspect that Eadmer's Anselm, though perhaps not Eadmer himself, may have much preferred such an overall stance, as interfering least with his own spiritual and intellectual concerns. Though Anselm did in fact make a lasting contribution to philosophy and Eadmer himself, after all, actually wrote a historical masterpiece, or two.

Despite criticism of his reliability, especially in relation to his apparent mis-dating of documents or even the alleged forgery of some, Eadmer's reputation as a historian has remained high and he has been a source for much discussion about matters of church and state. I have tried to suggest that his more original contribution was to capture an elusive sense of

overall shifts and possibilities latent in the 'well-known' events he recounts, and an awareness of 'history' as contemporary change, of his own life-time as a time of 'mutation'. His abiding appeal also lies in a further aspect. Who else from that period could have written some of the vividly alive passages already quoted? Or, as an excuse to enjoy a few more examples, the following anecdotes.

vivid

In the account of the Council at Bari, there is a memorable instance of Eadmer's capacity for making the most of a detail, in this case almost conjuring up that characteristic sound of chairs scraping on the floor as people hurriedly make space (R105, B109) :

> The first to break the silence was the Pope himself and in a loud voice he cried out, "Father and teacher, Anselm, Anselm Archbishop of Canterbury, where are you?"
>
> Now Father Anselm was sitting in line along with the rest of the leading fathers at the Council, and I was at his feet. When he heard that he was being called for, he got to his feet and answered, "My Lord and Father, what are you asking? Here I am." The Pope replied: "What, I'm asking, are you doing? Why do you keep mum among the rest of them? Come on, come on, I implore you, come up here beside us and take up the case of your mother church and assist us . . Help us, as if you truly had been sent here by God, for this very business." Then you could see all those around the Pope making a great deal of clatter, shifting their chairs, scrambling to make enough room for Anselm to sit, and eventually raising him to a place of honour among the group nearest the Pope, with the whole Council taken aback at these proceedings, and chattering about who this man was and where he was from.

Or this, a brief passage from a lively account concerning the question of whether or not Henry I's intended wife Matilda had ever been a nun. Eadmer probably enjoyed transcribing, or creating, this magnificent outburst from an indignant young woman, and I gratefully take the liberty of quoting Geoffrey Bosanquet's lively translation (p. 127):

> That I did wear the veil, I do not deny. For, when I was quite a young girl and went in fear of the rod of my Aunt Christina, whom you knew quite well, she to preserve me from the lust of the Normans which was rampant and at that time ready to assault any woman's honour, used to put a little black hood on my head and, when I threw it off, she would often make me smart with a good slapping and most horrible scolding, as well as treating me as being in disgrace. That hood I did indeed wear in her presence, chafing at it and fearful; but, as soon as I was able to escape out of her sight, I tore it off and threw it on the ground and

> trampled on it, and in that way, although foolishly, I used to vent my rage and the hatred of it which boiled up in me. In that way and in only that way, I was 'veiled', as my conscience bears witness. And if anyone says that I was dedicated, of that too the truth may be gathered from the fact, which is known to many persons still living, that my father, when by chance he saw me veiled snatched the veil off and tearing it in pieces invoked the hatred of God upon the person who had put it on me, declaring that he had rather have chosen to marry me to Count Alan than consign me to a house of nuns. That is my answer to the slanders which are spread abroad about me.

Matilda undoubtedly appealed to Eadmer as someone else, a woman, who did not 'fit'.

Powerfully though he could write, however, Eadmer's attempt to secure Anselm's status as a saint had little initial success, even within the Christ Church community itself, and when John of Salisbury provided his own shortened version of Eadmer's work at the request of Becket, in order to seek formal canonisation of Anselm from Rome, that attempt too was unsuccessful. With the Reformation repudiation of such practices as shrines, devotions at saints' tombs, and praying to saints, even the location of Anselm's tomb within the cathedral was forgotten. By the 19th century a visiting French Catholic who inquired after Anselm's resting place could be told by a cathedral official that the whereabouts of the remains of 'a rebel and a heretic' were of no interest whatsoever.

The 'English Reformation' was itself not so much an 'event' as what Eadmer called a 'mutation' – which was perhaps itself only a half-way house. It could be argued that the demotion of the very notion of sainthood, as indicating that at least some exceptional Christians had actually made it into heaven, eventually contributed to the undermining of any continuing confidence not simply in the efficacy of prayers to saints but in the very notion of a personal after-life to which any one of us might aspire. It was also part of the same wave of complex *mutationes* that not only ecclesiastical hierarchies but also some persisting 'feudal' features of political power were to be eventually challenged and partly displaced. Discernible in the conflicts explored by Eadmer were the lineaments of those which were later to shape the English Civil War, not primarily as formal constitutional issues but rather as reverberating political modulations or modifications, 'mutations' in an entire social formation.

It was a small straw in a wind which was eventually to blow very strongly indeed that though the official ecclesiastical hierarchies declined for a long time to recognise Anselm as a saint, there is evidence that the ordinary lay people of Canterbury organised their own society to celebrate a firm devotion to him. Perhaps he was remembered as their kind of Saint. A manuscript survives from about 1166 which lists the devotees of Anselm, as members of the 'Canterbury Guild of St Anselm'. Among those listed as

Walterius, Johannes, Baldewinus, Goscelinus, Osbertus, as the 'aldermon' and 'ianitor', as 'uxor eius' and 'filia eius', wife and daughter, there is an otherwise unknown though not quite anonymous 'Eadmerus'.

A final irony perhaps is that in the transmission of Anselm's writings there was often included a short treatise entitled *De conceptione Sanctae Mariae.* Devotion to the 'Immaculate Conception' of the Blessed Virgin Mary had been a somewhat parochial but very traditional Anglo-Saxon practice before the Norman conquest and it was in fact Eadmer who had written this treatise, not Anselm. Yet by its being mistakenly attributed to Anselm the treatise was regarded as theologically 'authoritative' and was eventually to provide one important source and support for the controversial dogmatic definition promulgated by Pope Pius IX in the 1854 Bull *Ineffabilis,* long after Anselm had finally been canonised a Saint in 1494 and officially declared a Doctor of the Church in 1720.

As a historian sometimes accused of forgery, Eadmer might have been both shocked and amused.

JOHN BALE & JOHN FOXE

I have so far been considering some of the mediaeval historians who lived and worked in the Christ Church monastery, covering between them roughly 1066 to 1500. I have not however treated them in chronological order but rather as prompted by considering several fairly basic issues concerning the writing of history. Those raised by the different accounts of Becket's death seemed relatively straightforward, a matter of which account can be regarded as the more accurate, but also raising the problem of the possible irrecoverability of 'what happened'. The very different treatments of individual deaths in the military and monastic chronicles of Anonymous and John Stone linked more directly to the underlying issue of how death is to be regarded, in relation to theological and philosophical notions of individuality and of continuity in an afterlife. The writings of Gervase prompted questions about the shifting scale and focus of historical narratives and the highly variable relationship between the length of an account and the duration of an 'event'. Eadmer's responses, as I have interpreted them, to the Norman conquest and to the ambivalent character of Anselm, resonate not only with specific problems of state-church relations but also with the nature of historical change, of how a particular sequence of events might be experienced, and interpreted, as a more general 'mutation', even involving a transformation in the very terms by which we understand a changing present. To designate these various historians as 'pre-Reformation' would itself imply one such 'mutation': that the events put in train partly by the unexpected death of Prince Arthur, which we initially considered in relation to the Christ Church Gate, eventually resulted in a transformation of the status of the cathedral itself and of the complex contexts in which we might consider it.

I want now to comment on some later historians, archivists, and antiquarians variously connected with the cathedral. Obviously, after the dissolution of the monastery in 1540 there were no more 'monastic chroniclers', and some of the writers I now consider had a somewhat loose relationship to the cathedral. I will focus on only a few figures directly germane to how we think about 'history' at all.

One consequence of dissolving the monasteries was to abolish some of the great libraries in the land, indeed almost the only substantial libraries apart from Oxbridge college holdings and the haphazard Royal or aristocratic collections. The danger was that the long-accumulated monastic manuscripts would simply be dispersed or destroyed.

In the 1530s an opportunistic poet and self-styled 'antiquarius', John Leland, was in some unclear sense commissioned by Henry VIII to search in monastic libraries for any manuscripts of possible value for the King's Library, and in particular for any documents which might serve to support the King's contest with the papacy over his intended divorce. Leland travelled the country attempting to inspect and list as many manuscripts as possible. At one stage he also hoped to provide a detailed travelogue of the whole kingdom, a gazetteer with comprehensive geographical and historical information. It appears that, not surprisingly, he suffered a mental breakdown trying to put into order the enormous mass of bibliographical and other data he had compiled. One can sympathise. His account of his journeys, or *Itinerary,* and his accumulated notes, a compilation simply known as his *Collectanea*, were eventually published posthumously but they had already served in manuscript as a crucial resource to be mined and recycled by historians for several generations.

One such was John Bale, who was to have a variety of connections with Canterbury cathedral and whose several endeavours can provide an initial focus for discussing some further aspects of the writing of history.

These can be partly characterised as the difference between ostensibly describing 'what happened' and explicitly arguing about '*which* happened', between recording events and arguing an interpretation, compiling chronicles and offering passionately polemical persuasion. This is not to say that mediaeval chroniclers had not also engaged in self-serving, deliberate, or even fraudulent mis-representation of 'what happened'. But the practices I will now highlight were more explicitly and directly shaped by controversialist concerns.

To take one example from sixteenth-century disputes: both Catholics and Reformers cited 'King Lucius' of Britain as having allegedly sent a request for baptism to a second-century Pope Eleutherius. Catholic apologists claimed this as evidence that British Christianity had always derived from the Pope, whereas Reformers quoted a letter, probably a thirteenth-century forgery, in which the Pope replies that a British King had no need of papal or imperial permission or intervention, since the Scriptures contain the whole of God's law, and 'by that law through God's sufferance' Lucius

should 'rule your kingdom of Britain, for you are God's vicar in your kingdom'. In this spirit, at the coronation of Edward VI in 1549 Archbishop Cranmer duly proclaimed that no bishop, church, or ceremony could make or unmake a rightful king who was directly anointed by God as Christ's Vice-Regent and Vicar on Earth, subject only to the judgement of God and therefore above all earthly authority. It was not a belief endorsed by those who still acknowledged the authority of the Bishop of Rome. That the mythical King Lucius featured so differently in two competing accounts would lead eventually to a critical examination of the grounds for asserting his existence in the first place. In any case, no mode of historical writing could actually settle the theological issues at stake in this dispute.

Bale

John Bale was born in 1495, into the pre-Reformation Catholic faith, became a Carmelite friar, and then a secular priest, but by the late 1530s he was a committed convert to the Reformation movement and an ardent propagandist, composing a stream of vituperative attacks on the Roman church. He was also an avid collector of manuscripts and books, had met Leland in 1535, and became himself a compiler of impressive exercises in what we would now call bibliography. In 1549 Bale published Leland's own brief account of his efforts, under the title:

> *The laboryouse iourney [and] serche of Iohan Leylande, for Englandes antiquitees geuen of hym as a newe yeares gyfte to Kynge Henry the viij. in the. xxxvij. yeare of his reygne, with declaracyons enlarged: by Iohan Bale*

Bale wrote in his preface concerning the plunder of monastic properties:

> A greate nombre of them whych purchased those superstycyouse mansyons, reserved of those lybrarye bokes, some to serve theyr jakes, some to scoure theyr candelstyckes, and some to rubbe their bootes. Some they solde to the grossers and sope sellers, and some they sent over see to the bokebynders, not in small nombre, but at tymes whole shyppes full, to the wonderynge of the foren nacyons.

The fate of much of the contents of monastic libraries was later to be directly linked with John Bale. In 1560 he was made a prependary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral, and when he died in 1563 he was buried in the cathedral nave. The year he arrived to take up his living, Bale published a new edition of his 1546 account of alleged 'unchaste practices' in the dissolved English monasteries. It was entitled *The actes of Englysh votaryes comprehendynge their vnchast practyses and examples by all ages, from the worldes begynnynge to thys present yeare, collected out of their owne legendes and chronycles.* It

can provide us with a characteristic example of Bale's contributions as a polemicist.

The tract attacked the monks both for indulging in promiscuous sex and also for perversely practising sexual abstinence instead of healthy marriage. In this survey of monkish turpitude, 'collected out of their own chronicles', Bale incorporated a revisionist version of the history of Christianity in Britain, including a reversal of traditional judgements stemming from Bede concerning the very Saint Augustine who had founded the cathedral of which Bale was now a beneficiary. In Bale's account, Augustine even became a murderer responsible for the deliberate slaughter of some 12,000 British clergy. Christianity, Bale claimed, had come to Britain not in 597 with Augustine but through Joseph of Arimathea's arrival in 63 A.D. Bale's primary emphasis in making this claim was that these remarkably early first missionaries to Britain were not only independent of and preceded any 'Roman' influence but were also all married men and therefore not Augustine's perversely celibate monks:

> For in the yeare from Christes incarnacyon lxiij. was Ioseph of Arimathe and other dyscyples sent ouer of the seyd Philip to preache Christ, and entered both with their wyues and chyldren, Armagus then beynge Kynge of the lande. This testyfyeth Iohan Capgraue in *Catologo sanctorum Anglie*, Thomas scrope *de anti. carm.* ca, 7. Iohan Hardyng in hys. 47. chaptre, and Polidorus uergilius. li. z. *Anglice historie.*

I have only partly modernised Bale's text, and retained his characteristic way of referencing his sources, to indicate the flavour of his polemical bite and to emphasise that he is writing a vigorous popular English, and certainly not using scholarly Latin for this polemical tract. He adds as a sub-title to this section of his account:

> *Brytayne first conuerted by men maryed.*
>
> These were surelye the orygynall begynnynges (sayth Polidorus) of the Christen Relygyon in Brytayne. Gildas witnessyth also, in his fyrst treatyse *De excidio Britannie.* That the Brytaynes toke the christen faythe at the verye sprynge or fyrst goynge forth of the Gospell, when the churche was most perfyght, and had most strengthe of the holye ghost.

According to Bale, it was Pope Gregory who, five centuries later, corrupted this 'most perfect' ancient British Christianity by sending Augustine and his perversely chaste, and unacceptably educated, monks to convert Britain:

> Now to returne agayne vnto Gregorye. He sent vpon the aforesayd occasyon, into Englande in the yeare from Christes incarnacyon CCCCC. xcvi. a Romyshe monke called Augustyne, not of the ordre of Christ as was Peter, but of the superstycyouse secte of Benet, there to sprede abrode the Romyshe faythe and relygyon, for Christes faythe

was there longe afore. With hym entered Melitus, Iustus, Laurencius, Ioannes, Petrus, Rufinianus, Paulinus, and a great sort more to the nombre of .xl. all monkes & Italyanes. Wele armed were they with Aristotles artylerye, as with logyck, Phylosophye, and other craftye scyences, but of the sacred scripturs, they knewe lyttle or nothynge. If ye beleue not me, reade in Iohan Capgraues Cataloge, in vita Augustini, hys interrogacyons, Ad Gregorium per laurencium et Petrum, and ye shall fynde them voyde of all christen lernynge, eyther of lawe or Gospell. yea, moste incypyent & folyshe.

For the fervent John Bale the archiepiscopal see and cathedral church of Canterbury owed its inappropriate eminence to this incursion of Romish superstition and cunning which had displaced London from its rightful previous superiority. Moreover, the very dates involved in this Roman invasion and usurpation were sinisterly significant:

> And in the yeare of our Lorde euen DC. [*He adds a helpful gloss*: Note: 600] did Gregorye sende vnto hym from Rome, hys prymates pall, with superaltares, chalyces, copes, candelstyckes, vesty-mentes, surplyces, alter clothes, syngynge bokes, rellyckes, and the blessynges of Peter and Paule. And so admytted hym for the fyrst metropolitane of all the whole realme, appoyntynge hys seate from thens fourth at Canterburye, than called Doroberna, the worthye cytie of London euer after depryued of her former tytle, and so made an vnderlynge. But the spyrituall fathers knewe wele ynough what they ded, beholdynge afore hande manye hydden mysteryes. They perceyued that Caunterbury was wele out of the waye, and moche nygher the sea than was London, and so moche the fytter for their craftye conueyaunces, and flyghtes to their holye father yf nede shuld requyre yt, with manye other commoditees els. Marke alwayes these nombers of Syxes and their mysteryes, for the age of Man and the Beast, *Apoca, 13*.

The apocalyptic danger thus comes to a head, conveniently, in the year 666, 'The perfyght age of the Beast', with the appointment of the 66-year-old Theodorus:

> Theodorus a Greke, was of pope vetelianus constytute the sixt archebyshop of Caunterburye, from Augustyne or sens the Papacye began, to make all sure here to Antichristes behoue, in the sixtye and sixe yeare of hys age, and in the yeare from Christes incarnacyon six hondred, syxtie, and sixe, which is in saynt Iohans Apocalyps the full age of the Beast, & the full nombre of man. Marke yt good reader. For now of a Beast, becometh he a kynge, ye, as Daniel calleth hym, the vnshame fast Kynge of faces. *Daniel. 8*. Presumynge to sitt aboue God in euerye mannys conscyence *2. Thessa. 2*. Named yt is there, the

nombre of man, and the nombre of the Beast, for so moche as yt was the tyme, wherin mannys lernynge most stronglye withstode the lernynge of God, to the prankynge vp of that odyouse aduersarye, the verye man of synne, and sonne of perdycyon, all blasphemyes therupon folowynge. Euydent is yt, by all the Englysh Chronycles, that then this Theodorus came hyther with the seale of that execrable Beast, to marke vp all to that most blasphemouse kyngdom. For neuer afore wrought the sprete of Antichrist, the mystery of iniquite so strongelye as at that tyme. For hyther than brought he all vayne & craftye scyences, of countinge, calkynge, measurynge, syngynge, rymynge, reasonynge, arguynge, dyffynynge, shauinge, oylynge, exorcysynge, incantynge, & coniurynge. Loke Iohan Capgraue, in *vitis Adriani*, et Theodori Besydes that Bedas wryteth *li. 4. Capit, 2.* and Ranulphus *li. 5. Ca· 18.*

Clearly it was part of the Beast's evil strategy in this ill-omened year to introduce arithmetic and music, reasoning and shaving, in order to make all future generations of English schoolchildren ever since utterly miserable, inveterately anti-intellectual, and effeminately beard-less. But the study of history was presumably a more acceptable part of Britain's pre-Beast inheritance, and having claimed that his account was 'collected out of their owne legendes and chronycles' as a true bibliographer Bale provided a list of his sources*:*

The Autours names both Englyshe and other, out of whom thys present Boke ys collected.

Abbas Vrspergensis.
Achilles Pyrminius.
Alphonsus de Castro.
Alphredus beurlacesis
Amandus Zierixensis.
Antoninus Florentinus.
Baptista Platina.
Baptista Mantuanus.
Bartholomeus Anglus.
Bedas Girnuinus.

– and ninety-five others. A concern with bibliographical reference was almost as characteristic of Bale's writings as his preoccupation with celibacy and sodomy, but clearly the book with the most influence upon Bale's overall interpretation of history was the book of Revelations, the Apocalypse.

Part of Bale's overall case, which might not have appealed locally, was that the traditionally revered saints, including several associated with Canterbury, were actually superstitious revivals of pagan gods:

> Not onlye haue they commended vnto vs whoremongers, bawdes, brybers, Idolaters, hypocrytes, trayters, and most fylthye Gomorreanes, as Godlye men and women, but also they haue canonysed them for most holye sayntes, sett them vp gylt Images in their temples, commanded their vygyls to be fasted, appoynted them holye dayes and the peoples to do them honoure with euensonges, howres, processyons, lyghtes, masses, ryngynges, syngynges, sensynges, and the deuyll and all of soche heythnysh wares. They haue done by vs as their olde predecessours the Idolatrouse prestes ded by the auncyent Romanes. They haue set vs vp a sort of lecherouse Goddes to be worshypped in our temples, to be our aduocates, and to helpe vs in our nedes. In stede of Iupiter, Saturne, Mercurye, Mars, Iuno, Proserpina, Diana, and Venus, which ded all their feates in whoredome, as the poetes verefyethe, they haue geuen vs Wenefryde, Cuthbert, Dunstane, Oswalde, Anselme, Becket, Brigyde, Audrye, Modwen, Edith, Osith, Ethelburge, and a great sort more of vnpure workers out of marryage.

agit-prop

Bale had not been a complete stranger to Canterbury before he arrived as a Canon at the cathedral in 1560. In the 1530s Bale had led a troupe of what might now be called agit-prop actors, sponsored by Thomas Cromwell to take travelling performances of pro-Reformation dramas, written by Bale himself, around the southern counties. There is even some (debateable) evidence to suggest that on the very evening of the day in September 1538 when Becket's shrine was demolished Bale staged a play before the King himself and his court, then paying a visit to Canterbury on their way back from inspecting the defences in Dover. That timely performance would perhaps have been of Bale's play entitled *The Impostories of Thomas Becket* which has not survived, though one suspects that it might not have been entirely popular in a city which was losing what was still at least a residual tourist attraction and the centrepiece of a popular festival.

In 1878 the *Archaeologia Cantiana,* published a rather imaginative account, by Canon J. Brigstocke Sheppard, of the sixteenth-century annual parade of the Canterbury civic guard, the marching Watch, with its 'pageant of St. Thomas'. The reconstructed details were based upon various specified payments listed in the city treasury records:

> In 1503-4, 'The Pagent of Seynt Thomas' [was] part of the procession of the Watch, in the shape of a car drawn by horses, and carrying an altar, before which the patron saint of the city, represented by a boy episcopally vested, bowed beneath the strokes of four other boys, armed as knights of the period. A simple *tableau vivant* would have been tame after the first five minutes, and therefore, to give animation, from time to time the knights flourished their swords, the Archbishop was

> struck prostrate by their blows, and a cleverly-concealed actor spirted some blood upon the martyr's forehead, two leather bags of that fluid being always provided for the purpose. This part of the play having been performed, the mob huzzaed, gunpowder was flashed off, and a 'vyce' representing an angel, flapped its wings and spun rapidly round and round, impelled by another concealed actor; who, by the way, only received twopence for his night's work, although he was hidden, half smothered by the hangings of the altar, in a cavity so dark that he required a candle to enable him to perform his mechanical part of 'turnour of the vyce'. This *vyce,* or device, must not be confounded with the low-comedy actor, sometimes representing a clown, oftener an imp, who, under the name of *The Vyce,* was introduced, both in and out of season, in the mysteries and moralities of the Middle Ages.

By the 1530s however:

> The dramatic representation of the murder of the Archbishop, with its attendant 'vyce', having been suppressed, the populace in compensation were provided with another show, apparently copied from the Gog and Magog processions dear to the Londoners. With a double proportion of gunpowder and some comically terrible giants, the commons were probably as well pleased as they were with the old show, which had doubtless long ceased to arouse any devotional feelings. . . The giants made their annual progress until the first year of Mary, when, to prepare the way for a revival of the old pageant, 'two charyotts', of course gaily decorated, marched with the Watch. In Mary's second year (1554-5), there was a complete revival of all the glories of St. Thomas and his show. The cart, we know, had been sold in 1537, but the harness, except the helmets, appears to have been forthcoming at the revival. A new cart was made, and a very substantial scaffold erected upon it, torches and candlesticks were provided in great numbers, but, and with good reason, the *vyce,* the blood, and the gunpowder were omitted. The knights' helmets having been lost, a new set was provided:— 'For makyng of a mould to make the helmetts for the knyghts xiiijd'. No further mention of the Pageant as an adjunct to the Watch procession occurs in the accounts; of course in Elizabeth's reign it was totally suppressed, but it is satisfactory to find that its end is not left in uncertainty. Far on in the reign of the Maiden Queen somebody found the old platform in the city storehouse, and turned it out. The short, final record is very suggestive:— 'Recd of Mr Arden for a payer of wheles and the bedd of an old pageant ij8 viijd.' A generation had passed away.

It is perhaps surprising, or impressive, how much of a long-lost event can be brought to life from dry entries in a financial records manuscript. In a

more scholarly recent mode James Gibson, in his edition of the Kent volume in the *Records of Early English Drama,* having similarly indicated the importance of Becket in the city's popular celebrations, offers a concise account of this particular consequence of the demolition of the shrine and includes a usefully succinct summary of the measures taken against the Becket cult:

> After the eve of the Translation of St Thomas Becket in 1538, the annual Canterbury marching watch with pageants became embroiled in the national and local power struggle between reformers and conservatives in the Henrican Reformation. Against the background of the 1536 injunctions of Cromwell that discouraged pilgrimages and the venerations of relics of the saints, as well as the forthcoming September 1538 injunctions that would require the removal of images, Henry VIII moved during the summer of 1538 to end the veneration of St. Thomas Becket. On 24 April 1538 St Thomas had been formally cited before the king's council. On 11 June St. Thomas having been cited and no one having defended him, the council pronounced its sentence: 'Judgment is given that in his life time he disturbed the realm, and his crimes were the cause of his death, although the people hold him for a martyr. He is therefore never to be named martyr in future, his bones are to be taken up and publicly burnt and the treasures of his shrine confiscated to the King.' Following the publication of this edict in London and in Canterbury the sentence was executed in September 1538 when the shrine was destroyed, the gold and silver and precious stones confiscated, the relics publicly burnt and the ashes scattered. In the royal proclamation published in November 1538 Henry proclaimed Becket a rebel: 'His pictures throughout the realm are to be plucked down and his festival shall no longer be kept, and the services in his name shall be razed out of all books.'
>
> The city complied with the king's order, selling 'the Cart of Bysshop beketes pageant' in 1539-40 . . and removing the saint's image from the city's seal in 1541. In July 1541 the city kept the marching watch without the pageants, paying 'for fetchyng of Gyantes & the gonnes from ye store house'. In 1542 and 1543 the city put on a play requiring a stage and costumes for four tormentors, possibly another re-enactment of the martyrdom of St Thomas Becket, but then sold the stage in 1543. No further expenses for a St Thomas Becket play or pageant appear in the records until the veneration of the saint was revived during the reign of Queen Mary. Again St Thomas Becket served as a political touchstone for the Canterbury establishment.
>
> In July 1554 the marching watch marched again with morris pikes, guns, drums, and torches, with the trumpeter of the Lord Warden of the Cinque Ports and the trumpeter of Dover Castle leading the procession. During the following year a new pageant wagon was

constructed for the St. Thomas pageant in the marching watch on 6 July 1555. No marching watch with pageants was held on 6 July 1556; however, though the burghemote court agreed on 22nd of September not to fine the outgoing mayor 10 pounds for neglecting to keep the watch during his year. There is an unfortunate gap in the city accounts between Michaelmas 1555 and Michaelmas 1557; however, expenses in the account book of the Drapers and Taylors Guild may indicate a watch with pageants on 6th July 1557. No watch was held 6th July 1558. During the following year on 13 June 1559 the burghmote court decreed that 'the common wacce used to be kept on seynt Thomas Evyn next shall not then be done with pageants.'

The new Canon John Bale most emphatically did not approve of these residual popular entertainments of the towns-people of Canterbury, as is clear from a polemical text he drafted describing the traditional midsummer revels on St John's Eve, St Peter's Eve, and St Peter's Night, which took place outside the Christ Church Gate during June 1561. Bale's unpublished tract has the splendid if somewhat bemusing title:

A retourne of James Cancellers raylinge boke upon hys owne heade, called the path of obedyence: to teach hym hereafter how he shall sedicyously gyve fourth a pernicyouse disobedyence agaynst the crowne of thys realme, instede of true obedyence.

Bale's irate complaint centres on the contrast between the lack of an audience for his preferred evangelical preachers in the cathedral and the recalcitrant activities of the unreformed townsfolk of Canterbury (as modernised in the REED volume from the unpublished manuscript):

As the preachers have been in the pulpit with a very small number of hearers before them, the city nevertheless being populous and great, they mocked them with their may games, troubled them with their trumbels, grieved them with their guns, and molested them with their other mad mysteries: they setting forth those unruly pageants, whose duty it had been, to have seen best rule, and upon the Sunday to have sought the glory of God with edification of soul.

Clearly, drama and pageantry were as much a site of historical contestation as polemical tracts. On 19th May 1564 Canterbury burghmote court sold the pageant wagon for the last time. Bale had died the previous year and did not witness this culmination of his own agit-prop dramatic efforts to replace such popular remembrances of the 1170 turning point in the city's fortunes. So let us return to the new turning point : the 1530s.

*

An alternative explanation of the record of Bale having staged one of his own plays in Canterbury in 1538, for which we know that Archbishop Cranmer paid the expenses, is that the play was not directly linked to the abolition of the shrine but was probably Bale's *King Johan*, which was definitely performed that same year at Cranmer's house in London, where it provoked an angry dispute concerning the character of Becket, and resulted in a law suit in January 1539. Some twenty years later, as he took up residence in Canterbury, Bale reissued one of his earlier propaganda plays and seems also to have revised *King Johan*, possibly for an intended performance before Queen Elizabeth. There is also a record of a legal dispute in Canterbury concerning the making of monks' costumes for a Bale play, in a case brought at the consistory court by Bale on 27th May 1560 against a Canterbury city alderman. Unfortunately, there are no details recorded of the play in question except that it required monks' habits. Perhaps it might even have been a potentially very popular dramatisation of monkish 'unchaste practices'?

King Johan has been claimed by some literary historians as the first verse 'history play' in England, but its staging conventions and mode of characterisation are more akin to mediaeval moral interludes than the dramatic form Shakespeare and Marlowe were soon to develop. Bale's cast list includes (in modernised spelling):

> King John. England. Clergy. Sedition. Civil Order. Commonality. Nobility. Private Wealth. Dissimulation. Usurped power. Treason. Verity. Imperial Majesty.

Some of these abstractions in the course of the play declare themselves to represent specific individuals such as Archbishop Stephen Langton, Cardinal Pandolf, the monk Simon of Swynsett who was alleged to have poisoned King John, and the Pope himself. There is a concluding appearance by an imposing figure, Imperial Majesty, presumably visually recognisable as a version of Henry VIII. The play opens with King John on stage declaring to the audience that he, like all Kings, rules 'by the will of God and his high ordinance' but also because he is 'a King by succession lineal':

> To declare the powres and their force to enlarge,
> The Scripture of God doth flow in most abowndaunce ;
> And of sophysters the cauteles to dyscharge,
> Bothe Peter and Pawle makyth plenteosse utterauns;
> How that all pepell shuld shew there trew alegyauns
> To ther lawfull kyng, Christ Jesu dothe consent,
> Whych to the hygh powres was ever obedyent.

To shew what I am, I thynke yt convenyent:
Johan, Kyng of Ynglond, the cronyclys doth me call
My granfather was an emperowr excelent
My father a kyng by successyon lyneall,
A kyng my brother, lyke to hym ded fall,
Rychard Curdelyon they callyd hym in Fraunce,
Whych had over enymyes most fortynable chaunce.
By the wyll of God and his hygh ordynaunce,
In Yerlond and Walys, in Angoye and Normandye,
In Ynglond also, I have had the governaunce;

Along with the somewhat dubious claim that Jesus Christ was always obedient to secular powers, Royal lineal succession and divine election are here combined. Towards the close of the play 'Imperial Majesty' repeats this affirmation:

The adminystracyon of a princes governaunce
Is the gifte of God and hys hygh ordynaunce,
Whome with all your power yow three ought to support
In the lawes of God to all hys peoples confort:
First yow, the Clergye, in preachynge of Gods worde,
Than yow, Nobilyte, defendynge with the sworde,
Yow, Cyvyle Order, in executynge justyce.

Thus is order restored, after much staged disorder and pantomime villainy by the papal representatives, and the historical record duly corrected:

Kynge Johan ye subdued, for that he ponnyshed treason,
Rape, theft and murther in the holye spirytualte ;
But Thomas Beckett ye exalted without reason,
Because that he dyed for the Churches wanton lyberte,
That the priestes myght do all kyndes of inyquyte,
And be unponnyshed. Marke now the judgement
Of your ydle braynes, and, for Gods love, repent!
NOBILYTE. As God shall judge me, I repent me of my rudenesse.
CLERGY. I am ashamed of my most vayne folyshenesse.
NOBILYTE. I consydre now that God hath for sedicyon
Sent ponnyshmentes great: examples we have in Brute,
In Catilyne, in Cassius and fayer Absolon,
Whome of their purpose God alwayes destytute,
And terryble plages on them ded execute
For their rebellyon. And therfore I wyll be ware,
Least his great vengeaunce trappe me in suche lyke snare.

In *King Johan* Bale alludes directly to the monastic chronicle tradition which had represented John quite otherwise. Recall that Gervase, for example, concluded his account of Hubert Walter's donations to Canterbury Christ Church by noting that King John had appropriated them. Bale tells a different story.

> K. JOHAN: Of priestes and of monkes I am counted a wycked man,
> For that I never buylte churche nor monasterye,
> But my pleasure was to helpe suche as were needye.

By contrast, when Truth or Verity appears, she alleges a different array of historical witnesses in John's favour:

> VERITY: I assure ye, fryndes, lete men wryte what they wyll,
> Kynge Johan was a man both valiaunt and godlye.
> What though Polydorus reporteth hym very yll
> At the suggestyons of the malicyouse clergye,
> Thynke yow a Romane with the Romans can not lye?
> Yes; therfore, Leylonde, out of thy slumbre awake,
> And wytnesse a trewthe for thyne owne contrayes sake!
> For hys valiauntnesse many excellent writers make,
> As Sigebertus, Vincentius, and also Nauclerus;
> Giraldus and Mathu Parys with hys noble vertues take:
> Yea, Paulus Phrigio, Johan Major, and Hector Boethius.

The appeal to Leland to arise and correct the chroniclers' record was apposite since precisely such a programme was the shared aim of Bale and, much more comprehensively, and successfully, of his friend and fellow revisionist John Foxe.

salvage

While I can't claim for Canterbury any credit for Bale's innovative verse history plays, he did exercise a crucial role in the development of English history-writing shortly after his appointment to the cathedral in 1560. The few years between his arrival and his death, 1560 to 1563, are indeed pivotal as a version of 'national history' was firmly established and set a precedent for the character of much English history writing to follow.

Bale had lost his own extensive library during a Catholic assault during his brief period in Ireland as the predictably unwelcome Protestant Bishop of Ossery. He was concerned to recover or replace as much of his previous collection as possible and kept an alert eye open for where his own lost books might have been appropriated by other collectors. After Bale was installed at Canterbury he had access to the cathedral's library, with some at least of its old contents still surviving in local collectors' hands who had

acquired manuscripts from both Christ Church monastery and Saint Augustine's Abbey.

In 1548 Bale had published a survey of English writers entitled *Illustrium Maioris Britanniae scriptorum*, building upon Leland's records and his own extensive knowledge. Nearly 500 authors and their works were listed, increased in a new edition in 1557-59 to 1128 authors with an index running to 10,560 entries. Nobody in England at the time could match Bale's bibliographical expertise. In July 1560, now safely under the patronage of a sympathetic regime, Bale received a request from the new Archbishop, Matthew Parker. The editors of the relevant documents summarise:

> In July of 1560 the group of ecclesiastical historians known as the Magdeburg Centuriators, led by Matthias Flacius Illyricus (1520-75), sent a messenger to Queen Elizabeth requesting her to send them materials available in England concerning church history and church councils. The Centuriators had undertaken the writing of a century-by-century account of ecclesiastical history that would demonstrate the errors of the Roman church and justify the doctrines of Lutheranism. … Elizabeth's response was to have her Secretary of State, Sir William Petre, write to Parker, forwarding to him the letter that she had received and enlisting his help. This was on 14 July, and it was just four days later that Bale in turn heard from Parker. Bale received Parker's request for help (which has not survived) on 18 July 1560 and sent his long and learned reply twelve days later. ...

It seems appropriate in the present context to give a proper bibliographical reference for this modern edition of the core documents: *The Recovery of the Past in early Elizabethan England : Documents by John Bale and John Joscelyn from the Circle of Matthew Parker,* edited by Timothy Graham and Andrew G. Watson, published for The Cambridge Bibliographical Society by Cambridge University Library, 1998.

Bale's rapid and efficient reply provided an extensive list of possible texts. These included, for example, Eadmer's *Historia Novorum* and his *Life of Odo*; Gervase was also listed, as were an impressive range of mediaeval sources. These suggestions became in effect a publishing programme for Archbishop Parker, including the first printed editions of several English monastic chronicles. Eventually at least forty-nine manuscripts originally from the Christ Church monastic library were 'donated' by Archbishop Parker to his own Cambridge college, Corpus Christi, rather ironically once known as Benet Hall. Perhaps a total of 140 manuscripts came from various sources in Canterbury including Saint Augustine's. For example, one important manuscript, which made its way, via a temporary appropriation by Dean Wotton, to Parker's collection and thence to Corpus was a version

of the *Anglo-Saxon Chronicle,* partly composed of a continuation written at Canterbury.

The Parker Library at Corpus Christi remains by far the most significant collection of Anglo-Saxon manuscripts. Parker's endeavours arguably prompted a major shift in how 'history' and the writing of it was conceived in England, partly as a change in tone and intention, but also crucially in forms of organisation and procedure.

Parker gathered a small group around him at Lambeth to collaborate on systematically collecting documents and salvaging manuscripts, compiling bibliographical lists, and undertaking editions and publications. This generation of the 1560s had a more far-reaching programme than Leland's limited commission to survey monastic libraries with an eye on the specific issue of the King's divorce proceedings.

Parker's ambition was to construct a polemically elaborated interpretation of the entire history of a nation and particularly to contest the received account derived from Bede's *History of the English Church and People* which had taken as its decisive moment the arrival of Saint Augustine in Canterbury in 597. For Bede, it had been the intervention of the papal mission and the implantation of Rome's ecclesiastical authority which had constituted the significant beginnings of English Christian history as a full member of the international European church. This was the case which Parker's group challenged through the composition of a very different account, one in which the Roman church was always only a foreign intrusion and there was a continuous history of both a self-determining English church and a monarchical state intrinsically independent of the pernicious papacy.

At the same time, however, it was maintained in *De Antiquitate Ecclesiae Britannicae*, attributed to Parker himself, that there had been an unbroken local continuity of apostolic succession in England leading to his own Archiepiscopate – even though Parker's consecration was itself open to challenge precisely on the grounds of invalid succession, a topic which was to provoke polemical debate even into the twentieth century. In accordance with the Parker account, despite frequent foreign Roman interlopers, the list of his Canterbury predecessors, as on those plaques now at the end of the cathedral nave, included no sharp breaks or illegitimate discontinuities in the ongoing history of a peculiarly English church.

Parker's *De Antiquitate* was in effect a revised version of Gervase's *Lives of the Archbishops* and a Canterbury manuscript of Gervase's work was duly donated by Parker to the Cambridge city library. However, despite considerable reliance upon monkish chroniclers, the role of any monastic establishment, especially in the early history of the cathedral in Canterbury itself, was consistently so represented by Parker's team as to make almost predictable Dean Stanley's later engrained hostility to monks. In particular, it was vigorously disputed that the cathedral had ever been part of a monastery at all, until at least the time of Saint Dunstan.

Nevertheless, what emerged from this ferment of revisionist effort was an attempt to establish a much more organised critical examination of the reliability of historical sources. This was in the service not only of establishing more precisely 'what happened' but more crucially of constructing a case as to which version of 'what happened' was to be approved and propagated. Fundamentally, the issue was to establish which side God Himself was really on in the history of the church of (or in) England. Whether Thomas Becket was a defiant rebel or a saintly martyr was, of course, not to be adjudicated by merely reading or editing contemporary documents, but any argument to be made for or against opposing interpretations could and should be supported or contested by a critical examination of the sources and their reliability. It was further crucial to establish an overall framework in which the relations of state and church were consistently interpreted in terms dismissive of any papal claims to authority in England.

As part of this revisionist process, a new national martyrology was to be constructed, offering a roll-call of martyrs radically different from, and indeed systematically reinterpreting, the once revered series of Augustine, Theodore of Tarsus, Dunstan, Elphege, and most certainly Becket and Anselm, now represented as heretics and traitors to the English cause and to royal authority. The brief excerpts given earlier from Bale's *Actes of the English votaries* provide a succinct example of this alternative history. John Foxe's even more influential *The Actes and Monuments* requires a longer examination.

Foxe

With considerable trepidation, I now want to consider Foxe's enormous work. The trepidation is partly due to the recently burgeoning scholarship on Foxe and his monumental text, since my comments are only unscholarly reflections, though indebted to such works as John N. King's *Foxe's Book of Martyrs and Early Modern Print Culture* (2006) and *Religion and the Book in Early Modern England: the Making of John Foxe's 'Book of Martyrs'* (2011) by Elizabeth Evenden and Thomas S. Freeman. Yet why discuss Foxe here anyway? He was not directly associated with Canterbury, but there was a specific connection through Bale, a more general link through Archbishop Parker, and in particular an association with every cathedral in England since a copy of his *Actes and Monuments* was ordered to be made available in each cathedral church. An inventory of the Canterbury cathedral fittings and furnishings in 1584 lists 'ii bookes of martrs one in the body [nave] of the church thother above in the north yle.' The cathedral library still has a number of copies of the 1570 edition, though its only copy of the rare 1563 first edition was donated in 1956, by William Urry.

Foxe, born in 1516, was of a younger generation than Bale but they suffered similar experiences under Henry VIII, losing their university

fellowships and leaving England in fear of persecution. In 1548, after Edward's accession, they were both resident for a while at the London house of the ardent reformer the duchess of Richmond. During a second exile under Mary they both worked for the Basel printer Oporinus**,** even sharing lodgings for a time. A preliminary version of Foxe's later work, published in 1554, was largely based upon Bale's unique copy of a compilation of Wycliffe-related writings, the 'Fasciculi Zizaniorum'. After a second return from exile, they were clearly in touch during the years immediately before the first English edition of *Actes and Monuments* was published in March 1563, and though Bale died in November 1563 the influence of his work upon Foxe persisted.

Another reason for my trepidation is the sheer size of the *Actes and Monuments* , which eventually was more than three times longer than the Bible, as successive editions increased in scale and scope. This precludes any detailed analysis, though some specific passages will be singled out for comment. In any case, my concern remains primarily with the significance of Foxe's work for how we think about the writing of 'history'. Including the very fact of its publication.

Even the initial 1563 edition involved an extraordinary printing effort, and a major investment gamble by the printer John Day, who had to import immense quantities of paper and increase the capacity of his printing presses and the number of his skilled workers to physically produce the volume. The considerable expenditure seems to have been indirectly subsidised by the award to Day of several monopolies on the printing of popular and lucrative titles such as *The ABC with Little Catechism* and *The Whole Book of Psalms* (King, p. 83). The whole project clearly had the backing and active support of various figures in the Elizabethan establishment, including Secretary Cecil and Archbishop Parker. Compiling the eventual content involved the collaboration of several contributors, as transcribers, researchers, translators, correspondents, and included the finding of new primary sources and documents as well as the reprinting of numerous previous publications. The title page of the first edition does not identify Foxe as the 'author' and it might almost be appropriate today to regard him as more like the organiser of a website than as a single author:

> *ACTES and Monumentes touching things Done and Practised by the Prelats of the Romishe Churche, specially in this Realme of England and Scotland, from the yeare of our Lord a thousand vnto the tyme nowe present. Wherin is liuely declared the whole state of the Christian Church: with such persecutions, and horrible troubles, as haue haypened in these last and pearilous dayes. Faithfully gathered and collected according to the true copies and wrytings certificatory, aswell of them that suffered: as also of the others that were the doers and workers therof. by. I. F.*

The second edition in 1570 was considerably enlarged and significantly reorganised. It was also given a new status. In 1535 and 1538 royal

injunctions had ordered that in every parish church a Bible in English should be made available to the congregation. In 1571 a decree by Convocation, the governing body of the Church of England, further ordered that a copy of Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* should also be displayed in every cathedral and that every bishop and dean should have a copy.

Foxe's work thereby became almost a liturgical text, even physically located alongside the lectern Bible itself. Though not systematically illuminated, as in mediaeval liturgical manuscripts, some copies were elaborately and impressively bound in decorated covers, while the many wood-cut illustrations could be vividly coloured. Moreover, the monthly calendar printed at the opening of most editions of Foxe's work, which assigned specific days to the individual martyrs whose stories were told in the *Actes and Monuments,* could in effect replace the traditional Catholic liturgical calendar of saints' feast-days. Gifts of the expensive *Actes and Monuments* were sometimes made to parishes in memory of deceased parishioners. In some respects the *Actes and Monuments* might take the place of such parish-owned texts as the *Legenda Aurea* – the 'Golden Legend', a popular compilation of stories of saints and their miracles – which used to be found in some English churches, and in general the *Actes* was clearly a rival to and substitute for such Catholic martyrologies as, for example, Richard Whytford's *The Martiloge in Englysshe*, published by Wykyn de Worde in 1526.

In other respects too, one might claim a certain continuity with older customs. The very title presented the book as itself a collection of 'monuments' and though Foxe's use of the term primarily referred to the notion of archival 'muniments' or records, there was also a sense that these textual memorials almost took the place of physical tombs, the provision of which within churches was by now suspiciously associated with the notion of praying for the dead awaiting the resurrection and therefore uncomfortably raised the problem of where they were in the meantime, thus perpetuating the possibility of purgatory. Whereas in the case of martyrs there was at least a strong tradition that martyrdom itself could ensure an instant access to heaven.

In addition, many of the recent martyrs who figured in Foxe's text had provided their own account of their sufferings which Foxe printed verbatim and at length, so these martyrs were in an almost literal sense speaking their own words from beyond the grave. This might be compared not only with the first-person requests for prayers inscribed on pre-Reformation tombstones but also perhaps with ordinary pilgrims having their alleged cures recorded by the attendants of Becket's shrine.

In Canterbury cathedral the prominent display of the *Actes and Monuments* might be seen almost as directly substituting for the dismantled shrine of Becket and providing instead a kind of collective textual reliquary for recent Protestant heroes. The second copy recorded in the 1584 inventory may have been located in the north ambulatory through which pilgrims to the

shrine had once passed. There is some indication that the stories of individual martyrs were read out, much as passages from saints' lives had been recounted in sermons on their feast-days. The opening calendar enabled a reading of the book which by-passed its overall historical narrative so that relevant passages could be read in memory of particular martyrs on the day of their martyrdom, almost as the entries in John Stone's chronicle were intoned to commemorate departed monks. Foxe himself disclaimed any such intention for the calendar, which may have been Day's initiative rather than Foxe's own, explaining that the tabulated list was simply an index, a handy way of locating specific accounts.

While there might have been a degree of continuity in reading practices, the actual content of the ever-expanding work was most decidedly not a celebration of continuity but an affirmation and demonstration of a deliberate break with the Catholic past. Perhaps even more significant than its semi-official status as a quasi-state-sponsored publication, the *Actes and Monuments* came in later centuries to be most frequently referred to not under its full title but simply as *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*. As such, it was frequently published in abridged or selected versions and many later editions appealed to a popular readership through the reproduction of the more lurid illustrations of the final suffering of the martyrs. Even those who had never actually opened a copy would become familiar with its reputation, and it was widely regarded and often represented as primarily an account of the Protestant victims of Catholic Queen Mary between 1555 and 1559 – the reign of "Bloody Mary".

a thousand years

However, if we look at the various sixteenth-century editions this impression needs considerable qualification. The 1563 edition has a total of about 1,830 pages and the reader does not reach the reign of Mary until halfway through, at about page 950. (Comparing the various editions is best done with the modernised numbering used by the online site devoted to the *Actes and Monuments* or by using the pagination of the once-standard 1837 edition.) The second edition in 1570 expanded to about 2,350 pages yet Mary's reign still began only at around page 1600, so the Marian martyrs took up only a third of the volume, as was also the case in the 1576 and 1583 editions. Foxe's book was not, after all, overwhelmingly concerned with 'bloody Mary'.

There are several issues lurking here and we can go back to the 1563 edition to untangle them. Note that the full title of the first edition included the phrase: 'from the year of our Lord a thousand unto the time now present'. At 'the time now present' in 1563 'Bloody Mary' had died only a few years previously. But why did Foxe's book begin in the year 1000?

Here the influence of John Bale becomes relevant. The 'First Part' of his *The Actes of Englysh Votaryes*, from which I quoted earlier, was published in 1546 and covered 'from the world's beginning to the year of our Lord 1000', ending with the Viking raid on Canterbury in 1011. The 'second part' was published in the reprint of 1560, covered from 1000 A.D. up to the reign of King John, and ended with the promise of a further continuation which Bale himself never completed.

Foxe's *Actes and Monuments* (*A&M*) could be seen as a variation if not a continuation of the *English Votaries* and Bale had also been Foxe's direct exemplar in constructing an alternative martyrology, providing a specific precedent by printing his editions of the trials of Sir John Oldcastle in 1544 and of Anne Askewe in 1547 which were to be partly incorporated into later editions of Foxe's work. Moreover, *A&M* exemplified a further application of the framework outlined in another work by Bale, entitled *The Image of Both Churches*, an extensive commentary on the text of the *Apocalypse* published in 1545. This influence is visually apparent on the famous title-page illustration of *A&M* with its representation of the true Protestant church depicted on the left contrasting with the corrupt Papal church on the right, literally an image of both churches. The choice of the year 1000 as the starting-point of Foxe's 1563 edition was prompted by Bale's reading of a verse in the *Apocalypse* (chapter 20) which he interpreted as meaning that Satan was imprisoned for the first thousand years after Christ:

> And I saw an angel descending from heaven, having a key of the bottomless pit, and a great chain in his hand. And he took the dragon, the old serpent, which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him for a thousand years, and put him in the bottomless dungeon and shut him up, and signed him with his seal, that he should no more seduce the Gentiles, till a thousand years were expired. And after that he must be loosed again for a little space of time. And I saw seats, and they sat upon them, and judgement was given unto them; and the souls I saw of them which were beheaded for the testimony of Jesus.

Foxe himself glossed this passage:

> By these words of the Revelation, here recited, three special times are to be noted. First, The being abroad of Satan to deceive the world. Secondly, The binding up of him. Thirdly, The loosing out of him again, after a thousand years consummate, for a time.

According to this chronological framework in the 1563 edition Satan was supposedly held in check until about 1100 A.D. but after that point Satan was loosed and Antichrist began to rule. On that basis, the turning point came with the papacy of Hildebrand, Pope Gregory VII, especially his assertion of papal power over Christian princes and his insistence on quasi-

monastic regulations for the ordinary parish clergy. In particular, the emergence of the Antichrist was signalled by the imposition of celibacy and the papal denunciation of princes for investing clerics with their ecclesiastical appointments as a form of simony.

In terms of English history, Hildebrand's contemporary Anselm was for Foxe a minor figure but Thomas Becket is presented as a major instance of the attempt by Satan to assert papal power over royal power. Accordingly, after only forty preliminary pages into the main 1563 text there is a detailed account of Becket's life, amounting to nearly 40,000 words and vigorously claiming that Becket was killed not as a martyr but as a traitor. The next main moment dealt with in English history is then the reign of King John, and on Foxe's reading it is John's resistance to papal power which makes him a Protestant hero. The focus is upon the struggle over the papal appointment of Simon Langton as Archbishop of Canterbury, the interdict laid upon England by the Pope, and the alleged poisoning of John by a monk – all of which in Foxe's eyes qualified John as a royal Protestant martyr. This account ignores such otherwise familiar matters as the role of the barons, with the support of Archbishop Langton, in wresting 'Magna Carta' from the King. The parallels with Bale's play *King Johan* are clear, and it has been suggested that this section of the *A&M* was directly adapted by Foxe from Bale's own unfinished third part of *English Votaries*

The overall logic of this arrangement in the 1563 edition is that the treatment of the first millennium, including the era of primitive Christianity, is only summarised in a brief opening survey, since it is events from the twelfth century onwards which are crucial to the present day. After the loosing of Satan around 1100 there was a period in which Antichrist prevailed, but the emergence of the Waldensians, of Wycliffe and Hus, the partial Reformation under Henry, and finally the valiant sufferings of the Marian martyrs are accumulating evidence that the reign of Satan will shortly come to an end in the final days of the Apocalypse. It is a compelling account. But based on a questionable foundation.

After all, the *Apocalypse* does not specify any particular dates for either the beginning or the end of the thousand-year period, and Foxe recognises that different calculations might be attempted. For example, in different editions:

> Concerning the interpretation of which times, I see the common opinion of many to be deceived by ignorance of histories, and the state of things done in the church; they supposing that the chaining up of Satan for a thousand years, spoken of in the Revelation, was meant from the birth of Christ our Lord.

Alternatively:

> Thus then, the matter standing evident that Satan, after three hundred years, counting from the passion of Christ, began to be chained up, at which time the persecution of the primitive church began to cease, now let us see how long this binding up of Satan should continue, which was promised in the Book of the Revelation to be a thousand years . . .

So did one count from the birth of Christ, or from his death, or from 300 years after his death? When did the 'binding up' cease? And how would one decide?

There is an extraordinary passage in the 1576 (p.124) and 1583 (p.123) editions, worth quoting at length (in a modernised format):

> The further I proceeded in the story, and the hotter the persecutions grew, the more my grief with them and for them increased; not only pitying their woful case, but almost reasoning with God, thinking thus like a fool with myself: —Why should God of his goodness suffer his children and servants so vehemently to be cruciated and afflicted? If mortal things were governed by heavenly providence (as must needs be granted), why did the wicked so rage and flourish, and the godly go so to wrack ? If their sins deserved punishment, yet neither were they sinners alone, and why was their death above all other so sharp and bitter?
>
> At least why should the Lord suffer the vehemency of these so horrible persecutions to endure so long time against his poor church, showing unto them no certain determined end of their tribulations, whereby they, knowing the appointed determination of Almighty God, with more consolation might endure out the same ? . . Whereupon, much marvelling with myself, I searched the Book of Revelation, to see whether any thing there might be found ; wherein, although I well perceived the beast there described to signify the empire of Rome, which had power to overcome the saints, yet concerning the time and continuance of these persecutions under the beast, I found nothing to satisfy my doubt.
>
> For, albeit I read there of forty-two months, of a time, times, and half a time, of one thousand two hundred and threescore days; yet all this by computation coming but to three years and a half, came nothing near the long continuance of these persecutions, which lasted three hundred years. Thus, being vexed and turmoiled in spirit about the reckoning of these numbers and years, it so happened upon a Sunday in the morning, I lying in my bed, and musing about these numbers, suddenly it was answered to my mind, as with a majesty, thus inwardly saying within me: "Thou fool, count these months by sabbaths, as the weeks of Daniel are counted by sabbaths." The Lord I take to witness, thus it was. Whereupon thus being admonished, I began to reckon the forty-two months by sabbaths: first, of months: that would not serve: then by

sabbaths of years; wherein I began to feel some probable understanding.

Yet not satisfied herewith, to have the matter more sure, eftsoons I repaired to certain merchants of mine acquaintance; of whom one is departed a true faithful servant of the Lord, the other two be yet alive, and witnesses hereof. To whom the number of these aforesaid forty-two months being propounded and examined by sabbaths of years, the whole sum was found to surmount unto two hundred ninety and four years, containing the full and just time of these aforesaid persecutions, neither more nor less.

Now this one clasp being opened, the other numbers that follow are plain and manifest to the intelligent reader to be understood. For, whereas mention is made of three days and a half; of one time, two times, and half a time; also of one thousand two hundred and threescore days; all these come to one reckoning, and signify forty and two months; by which months, as is said, is signified the whole time of these primitive persecutions, as here in order may appear.

Having arrived at the crucial figure of 294 years, there is then a compressed calculation entitled 'The Mystical Numbers In The Apocalypse Opened' intended to clarify these conclusions. However, even the manifestly sympathetic editors of the 1837 edition have to acknowledge, in a footnote:

> Our author has scarcely expressed himself intelligibly in this place: perhaps he means 'Let the hours of these three days and a half (which be forty-two) be reckoned at the rate of every week for a sabbath of years, or else every day of twelve hours for a year, or else every hour for a month, and so these three days and a half come to months forty-two.' Ed.

At least Foxe's revelatory re-calculations could now highlight a revised, and perhaps even conclusive, specific date, as in the 1583 edition (page 421):

> Now let us see how long this binding up of Satan should continue, which was promised in the Book of the Revelation to be a thousand years; which thousand years, if ye add to the xlii months of years, that is, to 294 years, they make 1294 years after the passion of the Lord. To these, moreover, add the 30 years of the age of Christ, and it cometh to the year of our Lord 1324, which was the year of the letting out of Satan, according to the prophecy in the Apocalypse.

Q.E.D.

*

One had then however to find some suitably significant event in 1324. Fortunately, it was the date of the papal condemnation of Marsilius of Padua. However, if the dates of the beginning and end of the thousand-year binding of Satan are to be adjusted, not only the arrangement of Foxe's book but the overall argument needed some modification. The biblical text may not have changed but its interpretation now implied a different logic, and not just a revised periodisation in terms of (well, roughly) 300-year units.

In effect, several historical accounts awkwardly vie with each other, with elements of different interpretations partly retained as shifting layers within the expanded and reorganised texts of the various editions of *A&M*. For example, as Foxe increasingly included details of the 'Ten Persecutions' of the early church, the role of the Emperor Constantine in ending those persecutions could be regarded either as an appropriate assertion of state support for the true church, or as the origin of perversely centralised papal control as 'Rome' began to assume Imperial powers. Implicitly, too, the partial conflation of state and ecclesiastical supremacy under Henry VIII might be seen as reviving Catholic corruption in a merely modified form, by contrast with the properly quasi-Constantinian role of Queen Elizabeth in bringing an end to the Marian persecutions.

At the same time, the addition of more instances of allegedly proto-Protestant martyrs throughout the entire papal centuries and the inclusion of ever more examples of recent martyrs under Mary, suggested an additional affirmation of the consonance between the early church and the contemporary Reformation movement, but also a downplaying of the previous periodisation in favour of a narrative which saw an almost continuous struggle between the true and the false church, a constant conflict perhaps now to be resolved not by some realignment of church-state relations but only by a truly apocalyptic closure of history itself. Foxe's final work, left unfinished at his death in 1587, was his own elaborate commentary upon the *Apocalypse*.

More or less incompatible readings of both the apocalyptic text and the historical narrative could shape and justify different accounts of specific events. If for example the corruption and decay of the true church had begun around 300 A. D., with the collaboration of Emperor and Pope concluding the early period of martyrdoms but also marking the beginning of the Satanic assimilation of papal power and imperial power, then the arrival of Augustine in England in 597 A. D. (almost exactly on time at the end of the second 294-year period) was undoubtedly an intrusion by an already corrupted papacy. Which had therefore justified Bale in sketching a far more comprehensive account of monkish turpitude throughout the entire period from the arrival of Augustine's monks to the suppression of the monasteries by Henry VIII.

Conversely, however, if it was a reliable mark of true Christian martyrdom that one was persecuted by the Roman church at whatever point in that long history, then this involved depicting figures from a diverse selection of historical periods as if they were already anticipatory precursors of a proto-Protestant position. Yet were such intermittent victims really aligned doctrinally with the sixteenth-century reformers simply because they too had been the targets of papal repression? On the other hand, if a genuinely anti-Roman Protestant position emerged only with, say, Wycliffe or Hus, had the 'true church' and its authentic continuity with early Christianity simply been in an invisible abeyance for a thousand years or so, even during the exact period (however calculated) when Satan's power was supposed to be 'confined'?

Not only is there a certain tension between these various underlying frameworks, jostling beneath the surface details of the expanding narrative, but the issue is highlighted of designating which 'history' is to count as authentic. Could the proper basis for deciding be a theory of history derived from a flexible reading of an authoritative sacred text, rather than from detailed historical investigations? Resorting to the text of the *Apocalypse* may now seem even to some evangelicals a peculiar way to decide the chronological framework for a past historical narrative. Foxe might have recourse to an expert in mercantile mathematics to check his arithmetic but, without some such firm schema, upon what criteria should the historian select the significant turning points in the narrative to be constructed? Indeed, the general issue of appropriate 'periodisation' is always problematic in relation to how one organises the actual composition of a historical work.

What interests me here, obviously, is not whether Foxe got his apocalyptic sums wrong. As we shall see, he was not to be alone in taking a hypothesis about the development of history from a text regarded as reliable and then proceeding to find the evidence to support that hypothesis. The case is more general. What is clearly apparent in the construction by Bale and Foxe of their polemical-historical accounts, and also of the counter-cases made by their opponents, is the structural role played by the presuppositions of already adopted doctrinal positions. In sixteenth-century England there was un-doubtedly a Protestant version of history and a Roman Catholic version. Bale may have felt that his version was validated by associating the Roman Augustine with the Devil's own number 666, and Foxe may perhaps have been pleased to reckon that his 1563 *A&M* was published on the 1500th anniversary of Joseph of Arimathea's alleged arrival in 63 A.D. But even to see such dates as significant in the first place required a prior set of peculiar assumptions.

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However much they may have shared an overall framework, there are differences between Bale and Foxe in their actual procedures. For example, Bale's account of Becket in *The Actes of Englysh Votaryes* begins:

> *The fresh and lusty beginnings of Thomas Becket.*
> As those authors report, which chiefly wrote Thomas Becket's life, whose names are Herbert Boseham, John Salisbury, William of Canterbury, Alan of Tewkesbury, Benedict of Peterborough, Stephen Langton, and Richard Croslande, he bestowed his youth in all kinds of lascivious lightness and lecherous wantonness. After certain robberies, rapes and murders committed in the Kings wars at the siege of Toulouse in Languedoc and in other places, as he was coming home again into England he gave himself to great study, not of the holy Scriptures, but of the Bishop of Rome's lousy laws, whereby he first of all obtaining to be Archdeacon of Canterbury under Theobald the Archbishop, then the high Chancellor of England, Metropolitan, Archbishop, Primate, Pope of England, and great legate from Antichrist's own right side

To put it mildly, despite the roll-call of named authorities, it would be stretching the evidence thin to claim that these writers attributed 'lascivious lightness and lecherous wantonness' to the youthful Becket, while the following sentence concerning 'robberies, rapes and murders committed' deliberately leaves it rhetorically ambiguous as to whether Becket himself is being accused of such crimes. Bale's account concludes with a magnificently sardonic comment on 'The false miracles and canonisation of Becket':

> Of Christ and all his apostles and prophets, are not written so many great miracles, as of this our Becket. As that so many sick, so many blind, so many blear eyed, crooked, bruised, mangled, lamed, drowned, palsied, sorrowful, exiled, with child, imprisoned, hanged, and dead, were by them as by him delivered. Neither was there ever so many writers in the Popish Saints life, or so many great volumes made as of his, as is showed afore. And all this was to blemish the King and to depress the high power in him and in all his successor Kings after him.

In contrast with Bale's bluntly crude polemics, Foxe's account of Becket follows reasonably closely his declared source, the 'Quadrilogus', a shortened composite version of several of Becket's biographers already extant in the twelfth century and first printed in 1495 in Paris. In particular, he makes use of several letters by Becket which were included in that edition and which articulate Becket's own viewpoint on the conflict with

King Henry. Foxe's account, unlike Bale's, is based upon the quoting of actual documents and his almost book-length study of Becket's life bears comparison with some later academic studies (dependent upon the same sources), though he also includes, for example, a highly tendentious allegedly verbatim version of an exchange between Becket and the Knights leading to his death which is presumably no more or less fictitious than those we looked at earlier. Incidentally, a different redaction of the *Quadrilogus* may also have been available to Foxe through Archbishop Parker, a manuscript which had belonged to John Twyne, at one time Bale's next-door neighbour in Canterbury.

More significantly, in 1563 Foxe is not so much concerned to denigrate Becket's general character as to insist that his specific motivation was not that of a martyr but of a traitor. His account begins (1837, II. p.196, modernised):

> If the cause make a martyr, as is said, I see not why we should esteem Thomas Becket to die a martyr, more than any others whom the prince's sword doth here temporally punish for their temporal deserts. To die for the church I grant is a glorious matter. But the church, as it is a spiritual and not a temporal church, so it standeth upon causes spiritual, and upon a heavenly foundation, as upon faith, religion, true doctrine, sincere discipline, obedience to God's commandments; and not upon things pertaining to this world, as possessions, liberties, exemptions, privileges, dignities, patrimonies, and superiorities. If these be given to the church, I pray God churchmen may use them well; but if they be not given, the church cannot claim them, or if they be taken away, that standeth in the prince's power. To contend with princes for the same, it is no matter, in my mind, material to make a martyr, but rather is it a rebellion against those to whom we owe subjection. Therefore, as I suppose Thomas Becket to be far from the cause and title of a martyr, neither can he be excused from the charge of being a plain rebel against his prince; yet would I have wished again the law rather publicly to have found out his fault, than the swords of men, not bidden nor sent, to have smitten him, having no special commandment either of the prince, or of the law so to do.

A note by Foxe in the margin of this passage ensures that the point is not missed: 'Becket no martyr' and this judgement defines in advance the framework in which we are to read the whole ensuing account of Becket, regularly reinforced by similar marginal glosses upon the documents quoted.

Once the treatment of the period of primitive Christianity received much more emphasis and space in subsequent editions, the account of Becket no longer figured so prominently or so early in the changing text. When Foxe, now much later in his overall narrative, deals with Henry VIII's attack upon

the cult of Becket in the Injunctions of 1539 he is content simply to quote the official text, including its highly distorted version of Becket's death (1837, V, 258, modernised):

> Item, Forasmuch as it appeareth now clearly, that Thomas Becket, some time Archbishop of Canterbury, stubbornly withstanding the wholesome laws established against the enormities of the clergy, by the king's highness' noble progenitor, king Henry the Second, for the commonwealth, rest and tranquillity of this realm, of his froward mind fled the realm into France, and to the bishop of Rome, maintainer of those enormities, to procure the abrogation of the said laws (whereby arose much trouble in this said realm); and that his death, which they unduly called martyrdom, happened upon a rescue by him made; and that (as it is written) he gave opprobrious words to the gentlemen who then counselled him to leave his stubborn-ness, and to avoid the commotion of the people, risen up for that rescue, and he not only called the one of them 'bawd' but also took Tracy by the bosom, and violently shook him, and plucked him in such manner that he had almost overthrown him to the pavement of the church, so that upon this fray, one of their company, perceiving the same, struck him, and so in the throng Becket was slain: and further, that his canonization was made only by the bishop of Rome, because he had been both a champion to maintain his usurped authority, and a bearer of the iniquity of the clergy:

Foxe would probably not have allowed his own more scrupulous account to resort to that laconic quoted parenthesis '(as it is written)' in justifying this predictably tendentious account of 'resisting arrest'.

which happened

By the 1583 edition Foxe was well aware that any historical claim was open to challenge and needed detailed substantiation and citation of sources, even in the notorious case of King Lucius (1583, p. 76):

> Then succeeded Anicetus, Soter, and Eleutherius, about the year of our Lord 180. This Eleutherius, at the request of Lucius, king of Britain, sent to him Damian and Fugatius, by whom the king was converted to Christ's faith, and baptized, about the year of our Lord 179. Nauclerus, Lib. Chro. Gen.6 saith it was an. 156. Henri de Erfodia saith it was in the year 169, in the xix of Verus the Emperour. Some say it was in the vj year of Commodus, which should be about the yeare of our Lorde 185. Timotheus, in his storey thinketh that Eleutherius came himself: but that is not like. And, as there is a variance among the writers for the count of yeres: So doth there arise a question among some, whether

> Eleutherius was the first that brought the faith from Rome into this lande or not. Nicephorus Lib. 2 cap. 4 saith that Syymon Zelotes came into Britaine. Some others alledge out of Gildas, de victoria Aurel Ambrosi that Joseph of Aramathie, after the dispersion of the Jewes, was sent, by Philip the Apostle, from Fraunce to Britaine, about the yeare of our Lord 63; and here remained in this land all his time; and so with his fellows, laide the first foundation of christian fayth among the Britaine people. Whereupon other preachers and teachers coming afterwarde, confirmed the same, & increased it more.

Foxe had by then recognised that almost any statement made within his Protestant version of history could be challenged and countered by his Roman critics, and vice-versa, and that this kind of convoluted consideration of contending sources had thereby become almost unavoidable.

Since Henry's 1539 Injunctions were partly concerned with banning the importation or printing of suspect books and especially of unauthorised translations of Scripture, the item concerning Becket was almost the only one of which Foxe approved, and he concludes the transcription of the injunctions with the comment: 'Here followeth how religion began to go backward', and then opens a new and pivotal segment of his overall account, entitled:

> *The Variable Changes and Mutations of Religion in King Henry's Days.*
> To many who be yet alive, and can testify these things, it is not unknown, how variable the state of religion stood in these days; how hardly and with what difficulty it came forth; what chances and changes it suffered.

Foxe then prints the Act of the Six Articles of 1540 which he regarded as marking a reversion to pro-Catholic positions. He immediately embarks upon a formidably lengthy critique of each doctrinal issue, in which he deploys an extraordinary range of citations, documents, arguments, and authorities, which he presents as evidence in favour of the Protestant position, as against the postulated Catholic position. The mere list of contents of this long segment of *A&M*, here given with page references to volume V of the 1837 edition, can indicate the extent to which the reader is plunged into quite different kinds of detailed debate covering several miscellaneous issues and historical periods:

> -- The Act of the Six Articles; the Penalties upon them, with the Oath of the Commissioners (p. 262);
> -- Allegations against the Six Articles : and first of Transubstantiation (p. 265);

-- The Words of Elfric, written to Wulfsine, Bishop of Sherbourne, against Transubstantiation (p. 275);
-- Another Epistle of Elfric, Archbishop of Canterbury, to Wulfstane, Archbishop of York ; in Saxon, with the English (p. 276);
-- A Sermon translated out of Latin into the Saxon Tongue, by Elfric, against Transubstantiation, a.d. 996 : followed by the English Translation (p. 280);
-- Verses in praise of Berengarius (p. 296);
-- The Words of the Council whereby Transubstantiation was first established (p. 297);
-- The Second Article: of both kinds (p. 299);
--The Third Article: of Private Masses, Trental Masses, and Dirige Masses (p. 302);
-- The Fourth and Fifth Articles : of Vows and Priests' Marriage (p. 304);
-- The Epistle of Volusianus, Bishop of Carthage, for Priests' Marriage, translated from the Latin; with two Latin Epistles (p. 315);
-- Answer to Anselm's Reasons against Priests' Marriage (p. 336);
-- The Sixth Article : touching Auricular Confession (p. 348);
-- A Copy of Philip Melancthon's fruitful Epistle, sent to King Henry, against the cruel Act of the Six Articles (p. 350);
-- A Note out of an old Martyrology of Canterbury; also another (p. 358);
-- An Act against Fornication of Priests (p. 359).

The extended discussion of the first article alone, on transubstantiation, stretches over thirty-five densely printed pages and includes passages printed in Anglo-Saxon characters. Foxe claims that the manuscript of this tenth-century text definitively shows that Aelfric did not believe in transubstantiation, but he also alleges that any texts not in support of that doctrine had been suppressed by Catholic authorities. The very fact that the Anglo-Saxon text survives while no Latin manuscript of the sermon is extant is taken as evidence that there had been a systematic destruction of the original sources, for which Foxe partly blames Lanfranc of Canterbury (1837, V, p. 262):

> And though the Latin copies and exemplars of these aforesaid sermons are not remaining in our libraries, let that be no marvel to thee, loving reader! but understand thereby the crafty packing of the pope's clergy, who, in the time of Lanfranc and pope Innocent, studying by all means how to prefer and further this their new-come doctrine of transubstantiation, did abolish and rase out of libraries and churches all such books which made to the contrary. And therefore, because Lanfranc, and other Italian priests here in England, understood not the Saxon books as they did the Latin (all that which they understood they

made away), the Saxon books, because they knew them not, they let remain: and this is the cause why our Saxon copies are now to be found.

As one can imagine, every statement in this appeal to the Aelfric sermon, far from clinching the argument, simply exposed the claim to fierce scholarly controversy. Anyone engaging with Foxe's argument would now have to read Anglo-Saxon as well as gain access to the actual manuscript supposedly being accurately quoted. The same problem of access occurred with all such appeals to manuscripts not easily available, though even more objections could anyway be made to any printed editions supposedly based upon such manuscripts. To respond to Foxe's hundred or so pages on transubstantiation and the other contentious issues dealt with in the 1540 Act would necessarily involve Catholic critics in elaborating even lengthier discussions and counter-arguments. In this use of Aelfric's sermon, for example, even Foxe's 1837 editors felt obliged to query his evidence, and a footnote reads (1837, V, p. 289n):

> This sermon, or homily, as it is more commonly called, was published separately by archbishop Parker, in the year 1566, and reprinted, afterwards, at Oxford, in 1675. See Strype's Life of Parker, vol. ii. book 4, page 503, Edit. Oxford, 1821; where Strype observes that Foxe 'hath left out several passages which contained some legendary miracles relating to the sacrament, and some particular passages which look favourably towards the doctrine of the church of Rome: which are not omitted in the archbishop's edition of the book'.

Thus the layers of contending references and authorities can inexorably multiply. Given the scope of Foxe's discussion of the Six Articles, it was inevitable that almost every argument offered and any specific evidence cited would be dissected and counterposed by his critics. By the time Foxe had become embroiled in such interminable scholarly objections and polemical challenges to his work, involving him in ever-expanding and detailed rebuttals to be included in successive editions of *A&M*, he might have felt rather more inclined to endorse the fifth item in the 1539 Injunctions:

> Item, That none of the king's subjects shall reason, dispute, or argue upon the sacrament of the altar, upon pain of losing their lives, goods, and chattels, without all favour, only those excepted that be learned in divinity: they to have their liberty in their schools and appointed places accustomed for such matters.

However, one effect of such fierce disputes was to prompt the publication, and critically argued assessment, of many previously

inaccessible manuscripts, as in Parker's programme of printing the mediaeval chronicles and other documents salvaged from the now dissolved monastic libraries.

And yet, simply printing or even editing manuscripts was not itself a solution to the problem I have been deliberately demonstrating in this section. Since the work of an author may exist in several different editions, formats, and redactions, with significant differences between them, it is not obvious how to decide which version of a text might be treated as authoritative, if any. The 1837 edition of the *Actes and Monuments* was notoriously controversial, yet without access to at least the four editions published in Foxe's own lifetime any reader would be uncertain concerning any citations or quotations from the *A&M*. In any case, as a variant upon the problem of Becket's authentic last words, which edition should one trust anyway? Or is choosing a preferred text itself a way of evading the complexity of 'writing history'?

cases

Shortly before Foxe's lament concerning 'how religion began to go backward' under Henry VIII, he had provided an extended treatment of the case of John Lambert, including Lambert's own detailed rebuttals of the forty-five articles under which he was examined for heresy, taking up dozens of printed pages. Again, John Bale had preceded Foxe, having published in 1548 Lambert's treatise on the eucharist directly addressed to Henry VIII, as an (unsuccessful) appeal against his death sentence. The treatise was precisely an instance of the kind of argument conducted by those 'that be learned in divinity' and its discussion of, for example, the possible bi-location of Christ's body was unlikely either to persuade or dissuade any ordinary reader with a prior position on the matter, including Henry himself. An entire *Actes & Monuments* comprised of such material and consisting of the kind of lengthy polemical arguments around the Six Articles would have been highly unlikely to earn it a wide readership.

Bale had however also presented Foxe with a more effective and engaging model in his publications on *The Examination and Death of Lord Cobham* (1544), *The Examination of William Thorpe* (1547), and the two *Examinations of Anne Askewe* (1547 and 1548). In the case of Sir John Oldcastle (Cobham), for example, Bale had collected a number of documents, including those from the actual examination and trial of Oldcastle. Taken together, the documents told a compelling story of contestation and confrontation, including an escape from imprisonment, and culminating in dramatic betrayal, defeat, and execution, a fate which was at the same time a triumphant vindication of Oldcastle in his martyrdom.

Here, we can recognise, was a formula which could underpin the popular success of the later *Actes & Monuments*. Printing the actual trial record itself,

or a suitably edited version, anticipated what Alfred Hitchcock is supposed to have remarked about filming a debate: that the attention of the audience will be gripped if they know that whoever loses the argument will die.

Foxe's readers would have known in advance that many of the figures whose 'examinations' and trials are presented in *A&M* would, by the very fact of their inclusion, have already in one sense 'lost the debate' since they were indeed executed, but in another sense they had triumphed in becoming martyrs.

Printing the actual transcripts had the further advantage from Foxe's viewpoint that his intended readers would themselves have endorsed exactly the kind of argument in support of their positions offered by the Protestant protagonists themselves: to appeal to the very words of Scripture. Though some might indeed provide 'learned' citations of patristic or even legal authorities, the trump-card of the accused Protestant was invariably to quote holy scripture. To do so required only a good memory, or perhaps continued access to a translation of the Old and New Testaments, as against any numerous weighty tomes or scholastic treatises that Catholic inquisitors and prosecutors might want to produce against them.

In that respect, many ordinary readers could have felt themselves to be almost direct participants in those contests, able to recognise and endorse the scriptural quotations for themselves, though with the admitted advantage of not being personally subjected to a gruesome consequence. Add to this the frequent inclusion of highly personal documents, both professions of faith and letters of exhortation to family and friends, and the reader was drawn into a compelling emotional identification with the victims. It was a formula later to be elaborated by many novelists and – to adapt a six-year-old's description of Canterbury cathedral – it unforgettably produced 'a big book full of stories'.

The comparison with a cathedral might be pursued. The eventually enormous *Actes and Monuments* incorporated several overlapping layers of multiple revisions and elaborations, assimilating into its own complex text numerous documents, directly quoted or lengthily summarised, from a range of historical periods stretching from 'primitive' Christianity and the patristic era to personal accounts and letters written very recently by executed victims, whose individual stories were stitched together into the ever-growing structure of the book, not unlike the addition of dedicated side-chapels, but with the central narrative armature constantly in view. Radically different genres of writing were almost chaotically assembled into baroque juxtapositions within the emerging overarching text as arguments and explorations covering a range of entangled issues gradually accumulated. The difficulty for a reader, as for a cathedral visitor, was to focus appropriately on both the overall architecture and endlessly proliferating details.

Bale's edition of the documents surrounding Oldcastle's trial can highlight some further points. For example, he several times explicitly proposes Oldcastle, or Lord Cobham, as a suitable Protestant replacement for Thomas Becket:

> When the Gospell laye dead, gloryouse Thomas Becket was a saynct & Iohan Oldecastell a forgotten heretyque. But now that the lyght therof shyneth we are lyke to see yt farre otherwyse. For proude Becket hath alredye hydden his face and poore Oldecastell begynneth now to apere verye notable. . . . Conferre the causes of this godlye manys death with the poyntes that Thomas Becket dyed for and other Popishe martyrs besydes & ye shall fynde them farre dyfferent and vnlyke . . .tell me which of these two semeth rather to be the martyr of Christ and which the Popes martyr?

Quite markedly, throughout the work there is an emphasis upon the copying of texts. Bale insists that he has used an authentic copy of Oldcastle's own writing:

> he toke paper and penne in hande & so wrote a Christen confessyon or rekenyng of his fayth (which foloweth here after) and both sygned and sealed it with his owne hande. . . Than caused he the aforeseyd confessyon of his fayth to be copyed agayne and the answere also which he had made to the .iiii. articles proponed agaynst him to be written in maner of an indenture in two shetes of paper. That whan he shuld come to his answere he myght geve the one copye vnto the Archebysshop and reserue the other to himselfe. ...

As the trial proceeds:

> And than he toke out of his bosome a certen wrytynge endented concernynge the artycles wherof he was accused and so openlye redde yt before them geuynge yt vnto the Archebyshop as he had made therof an ende. Wherof this is the copye.

Bale then prints the entire document as written by Oldcastle. After Archbishop Arundel has secured the verdict of heresy he commanded his bishops that:

> the sentence of excommunycacyon concernynge both this heretyque and his fawtours to be publyshed through out all youre dyoceses in cytees townes and vyllages by youre curates and parryshe Prestes soche tyme as they shall haue most recourse of people. And se that yt be done after this sort. As the people are thus gathered devoutlye togyther lete the curate euerye where go into the pulpet and there open declare and

> expounde this processe in the mother tonge in an audyble and intellygyble voyce that yt maye wele be perseyued of all mene.

Bale characteristically adds the gloss: 'Note: antichrist sendeth forth his souldyers'. He insists that his own copy of the trial documentation has passed through a named sequence of ecclesiastics, each of whom has made a further copy to be transmitted along the chain. After Oldcastle is imprisoned:

> Whyle the lorde Cobham was thus in the tower he sent out preuylye vnto his fryndes. And they at his desyre wrote this lytle byll here folowynge causynge yt to be set vp in dyuerse quarters of London that the people shuld not beleue the slaunders and lyes that his enemyes the Bysshoppes seruauntes and Prestes had made on him a brode. And this was the lettre.

Again Bale prints it in full. The response by Arundel was to concoct a false abjuration or recantation attributed to Oldcastle which was also circulated to counter the distribution of Oldcastle's own leaflet and a kind of poster war commences:

> And thervpon they counterfeted an abiuracyon in his name that the people shuld take no holde of that opynyon by anye thynge they had hearde of him before and to stande so in the more awe of them consyderynge him so great a manne & by them subdued.

Again Bale provides a complete copy of the false document, now labelled as such by him: 'An abiuracyon counterfeted of the Bysshoppes'. After printing the false statement in full Bale further makes clear its status:

> Neuer came this abiuracyon to the handes of the lorde Cobham neyther was yt compyled of them for that purpose but onlye therwith to bleare the eyes of the vnlerned multytude. And whan they perfeyued that polycye wolde not helpe but made more & more agaynst them than sought they out an other false practyse.

Bale's account concludes:

> Thus hath syr Iohan Oldecastell a tryumphaunt victorye ouer his enemyes by the veryte which he defended all contrarye to the blynde worldes expectacyon.

This extended battle of what we would now call propaganda, dirty tricks, manipulative public relations, misinformation, and even 'fake news', is clearly an extension of the contest we have seen during the actual trial, and

in this conflict of opposed proclamations we can also see an anticipation of the later textual combats around the *Actes & Monuments* and its critics. By then we are no longer dealing primarily with handwritten copies of copies of copies. As with Bale's own publications, each edition of the *A&M* involved the complex and expensive apparatus of the printing press and the distribution of multiple printed volumes. But just as Oldcastle's supporters and prosecutors could rapidly print off posters and leaflets, within a generation or so the conflicts around differing dogmatic positions would be conducted not only in the exchange of hefty argumentative tomes but in cheaper, often flimsy, and far from scholarly pamphlets. The Thomason Collection of ephemeral civil war publications was soon to supplant the anxious collecting and retrieval of dispersed monastic manuscripts.

Cranmer

Let me however include an extract from a particular transcript copy which Foxe might well have preferred to be different, or even suppressed, but which the increasing availability of some official records made it difficult easily to falsify. Foxe has occasionally been shown to have selectively ignored or modified details in his sources in order, for example, to represent some of the Kent and Canterbury martyrs as rather more orthodox in their beliefs than the extant material demonstrates. But when he came to the trial of Archbishop Cranmer himself in 1555 – perhaps remembering Cranmer's own role in the burning of John Lambert – Foxe left the following profoundly embarrassing exchange intact:

> Martin:— "Now sir, as touching the last part of your oration, you denied that the pope's holiness was supreme head of the church of Christ."
> Cranmer: — "I did so."
> Martin: — "Who say you then is supreme head ? "
> Cranmer: — "Christ."
> Martin: — "But whom hath Christ left here in earth his vicar and head of his church ?"
> Cranmer: — "Nobody."
> Martin: — "Ah ! why told you not king Henry this when you made him supreme head? and now nobody is. This is treason against his own person as you then made him."
> Cranmer: — "I mean not but every king in his own realm and dominion is supreme head, and so was he supreme head of the church of Christ in England."
> Martin: — "Is this always true? and was it ever so in Christ's church?"
> Cranmer: — "It was so."
> Martin: — "Then what say you by Nero? He was the mightiest prince of the earth after Christ was ascended: was he head of Christ's church? "
> Cranmer: — "Nero was Peter's head."

Martin: — " I ask whether Nero was head of the church or no? If he were not, it is false that you said before, that all princes be, and ever were, heads of the church within their realms."
Cranmer: — "Nay, it is true, for Nero was head of the church : that is, in worldly respect of the temporal bodies of men, of whom the church consisteth: And some credit he beheaded Peter and the apostles. And the Turk too is head of the church in Turkey."
Martin: — "Then he that beheaded the heads of the church, and crucified the apostles, was head of Christ's church: and he that was never member of the church, is head of the church, by your new-found understanding of God's word."

At this point Thomas Cranmer might have remembered his coronation sermon to Edward VI, and perhaps even some lines from the 1538 performance of Bale's *King Johan*, as he was trapped by the prosecutor Martin into accepting that according to his own position the Emperor Nero must have been the legitimate head of the church of the apostles. The 1837 editors intervene to clarify (vol. VIII, p. 57 n2):

> King Henry was not supreme head but only of his own realm. The Pope will be universal head over all.

Foxe contents himself with claiming that Cranmer

> dying in such a cause, . . was to be numbered among Christ's martyrs, much more worthy of the name of Saint Thomas of Canterbury, than he whom the pope falsely before did canonizse. (VIII, p.90)

As far as I know, Cranmer himself did not claim that the verbatim record was inaccurate. Or that he hadn't been sincere in what he was alleged to have said in order to become the Archbishop of Canterbury.

fake news

My former colleague Pat Collinson once remarked that if John 'Bilious' Bale were operating today he would aspire to be the editor of Rupert Murdoch's *Sun* newspaper. The comment hardly requires a gloss. Bale's vigorous form of polemic was clearly characterised by a dubious or at best flexible attitude to Verity despite her eponymous starring role in his *King Johan*. The more restrained Foxe would perhaps settle for managing the *Telegraph* or presenting *Fox News* (no relation). Their complementary efforts undoubtedly left a lasting mark upon English popular understanding of history, and in particular influenced a virulent strain of anti-Catholic sentiment still recognisable as a contributory strand in the hostility to 'Europe' evinced in nationalist-populist 'Brexit' attitudes in recent years,

fostered and fuelled by a news coverage which at times seemed to conflate 'Brussels' and the Treaty of Rome with the satanic Pope of Roman Catholicism. The centuries-long attitude to 'Papists' in post-Reformation England is regularly manifested in popular novels and ludicrous horror movies featuring sadistic Inquisitors, diabolical Vatican conspiracies, and Machiavellian Jesuits, but is also still tragically at work in today's real Northern Ireland.

Other long-term tendencies might be more speculatively linked to Bale and Foxe, whether as influences or exemplars. Browsing those early editions is a reminder of the pivotal importance of the 'mechanical reproduction' of images as much as the duplication of printed text. While the notion that it was the gruesome pictures which originally made Foxe's work 'popular' is partly misleading (the woodcuts increased the price of a book already unaffordable for most people), the subsequent history of heavily illustrated reprints did reinforce the influence of the *A&M* and helped shape persistent elements in English visual culture.

The images in *Actes* provided vivid support for the text, almost as if the lurid representations were a reliable and even evidential form of eyewitness (we can *see* the flames), supplementing the martyrs' own self-witnessing in their posthumously-printed accounts and letters. Following the long development of an increasingly illustrated popular press, today's dominant modes of television news-reporting characteristically combine saturation visual presentation with voluble vox-pop interviews and often superfluous viewer-contributions. That 'ordinary people' could be witnesses and even agents rather than merely passive observers of an unfolding history can both positively erode engrained political subordination and shade over into the drastic resurgence today of publicity-oriented 'martyrdom', staging horrific terrorist acts rather than enduring heroic suffering.

In the quieter realm of merely academic history-writing, the example of *A&M* as a sustained attempt to provide overwhelming documentation and, eventually, critical assessment of sources, contributed to a reshaping of how historical research was to be conducted, as more generally did Parker's organised printing of mediaeval chronicles and Anglo-Saxon texts. The attacks of Counter-Reformation critics deserve some ancillary credit for the sharpening of critical tools, as in the sustained assaults on Foxe's work by Nicholas Harpsfield, the Marian Archdeacon of Canterbury long imprisoned under Elizabeth, whose vigorous dissections resulted in almost equally voluminous critiques and ripostes. Thomas Freeman cites, for example, Foxe's thirty-page attempted rebuttal of Harpsfield's four-page critique concerning the case of Oldcastle.

Yet such exchanges, whether vitriolic or eirenical in tone, proved essentially interminable, since the provision of counter-documentation normally provoked only further mutual accusations of selectivity and falsification. Academic procedures have not yet entirely abandoned such practices, though they have partly learned to disentangle the writing of

history from the resolution of doctrinal disputes. If only because, however much competing historical evidence might be proffered, if history is 'what happened' then the mere fact that Popes were at times able to exercise authority or power over emperors and kings, or that ecclesiastical officials condemned particular beliefs as heretical, cannot itself directly support the validity or otherwise of those actions. That before 200 A.D., or after Constantine, or since 597 A.D., some Christians took up particular positions does not in itself authenticate or invalidate their beliefs, and even 'witnessing' to the point of martyrdom does not guarantee a divine endorsement, unless, as Foxe assumed, 'mortal things were governed by heavenly providence (as must needs be granted)'. After all, while Foxe could list 312 named victims of Catholic persecution, the Vatican has also categorised as 'martyrs' some 359 adherents of its own allegiance who were executed, normally by being hanged, drawn and quartered, in England between 1534 and 1680.

Yet even in the wake of such undecidable doctrinal-historical disagreements, appeals to 'history' have remained a way of buttressing not only religious but political and legal positions, whether citing in law the right 'precedent' or selecting a preferred period at which an authentic 'nation' might be found. The writing of 'history' has proliferated, voraciously enabled above all by the technology of printing. John Foxe enthused that printing itself was divinely ordained (1837 III p. 718ff):

> In following the course and order of years, we find this aforesaid year of our Lord 1450, to be famous and memorable, for the divine and miraculous inventing of printing.

He compared 'this gift of printing' to 'the gift of tongues' and claimed that:

> the blessed wisdom and omnipotent power of the Lord began to work for his church; not with sword and target to subdue his exalted adversary, but with printing, writing, and reading: to convince darkness by light, error by truth, ignorance by learning. So that by this means of printing, the secret operation of God hath heaped upon that proud kingdom a double confusion. Wherefore I suppose, that either the pope must abolish printing, or he must seek a new world to reign over: for else, as this world standeth, printing doubtless will abolish him. By this printing, as by the gift of tongues, and as by the singular organ of the Holy Ghost, the doctrine of the gospel soundeth to all nations and countries under heaven; and what God revealeth to one man, is dispersed to many, and what is known in one nation, is opened to all.

A sceptic contemplating the English and European Reformation might instead murmur that the divine message concerning the 'doctrine' seemed rather to indicate that 'what is known in one nation' actually differs from

what is 'known' in each other nation and depends upon who happened, perchance, to be the current monarch. Partly because each nation attempted to control by law what could be printed within or imported into national boundaries.

Foxe also registered the need to provide, independent of the convolutions of history, justifications for specific doctrinal positions by trying to provide stand-alone arguments concerning, for example, transubstantiation. Hence his lengthy insertions into the account of the Six Articles, his translation (never fully published) into Latin of Cranmer's treatise on the Eucharist, and his own attempt at rigorously logical exposition and argument concerning tran-substantiation in his *Syllogisticon,* published by Day in 1563. Nevertheless, Foxe believed that divinely-shaped history (as signified in the *Apocalypse*) would eventually vindicate those doctrinal positions.

In what might be regarded as a secular variation on this kind of confidently overarching framework, some followers of Karl Marx would also argue that 'history' had an underlying logic, and that economic history in particular could be analysed to reveal inevitable and contradictory developments which explained and justified the particular forms of periodisation which shaped his own overall historical narrative. More technologically-minded perspectives might assert confidence in an eventual scientific *deus ex machina* for mankind's destiny or alternatively proclaim a climatological Antichrist complete with Four Apocalyptic Horsemen.

One unavoidable issue in such schemata is that of agency, whether the relevant actors are primarily witnesses to the inevitable or enabling agents in the unfolding historical process, with determinism as a variant of divine predestination. For Marx this issue involved an attempted methodological reconciliation between claiming that the structure of 'capital' in all its logical ramifications underpinned the movement of modern history, and the more politically engaging affirmation that capitalists were the appropriate agency and enemy to be actively combatted. As with religious allegiances, political commitments provoked quasi-scholastic differences over the interpretation of a complex and difficult text, whether intricate biblical discussions of dissenting conventicles or the factional debates of party committees. And all such comprehensive interpretations of 'history' were confronted by the ever-accumulating mountains of textual and other evidences endlessly adduced in support of particular explanations, hypotheses and speculations. As with Bale and Foxe, polemic colluded with bibliography.

Consider the range of different kinds of textual resources deployed in the *Actes & Monuments*, and take just one category, the citation and quotation of 'official' records and transcripts. Matthew Parker's notion of making available manuscripts salvaged from the denuded monasteries to support, or create, a new national history helped lead eventually to the British Library, constituted partly from the Royal Library and the accumulated private collections of post-Reformation manuscript and book hunters from

Leland onwards, and now with the legal right to receive all copyrighted UK publications. With the related development of a Public Record Office, making State archives increasingly available to the public, we can now almost take for granted access to an enormous bulk of accumulated records of government and to the immense multiplication of scholarly publication, whether monograph or periodical, built upon such access. And now this vast inherited expansion of manuscript and printed material has entered a new development or even dimension: the digital.

We can here supplement earlier remarks made in relation to Gervase. Whereas his large and small Chronicles, for example, were written primarily for his fellow monks to read in his own monastic library, we now have access to a global library of digitised versions of printed works and increasingly to digitised images of manuscripts. Problems of scale and scope in the construction of Gervase's historical narratives are now pressing issues in the pursuit of all forms of scholarship. There are no longer only a dozen or so accounts of Becket's death but we can consult online several hundred secondary accounts and scholarly studies. A reader of *A&M* in 1563 who attempted to check Foxe's claims or verify the documents he used in relation to Becket would almost have needed privileged access to Parker's own collection of manuscripts, or at least try to find a copy of the 1495 *Quadrilogus* published in Paris seventy years previously. Whereas I can not only consult online the seven volumes of the *Materials* in the Rolls series but even download the 1495 Paris volume itself from the Bibliotheque Nationale, and compare the text of the letters quoted against a printed copy of Duggan's edition of those letters, as well as scrutinise digital images of the relevant manuscripts in the Corpus Parker library.

I am today disappointed, even surprised, to find that any particular book I am looking for which was published between 1480 and 1923 (the current US cut-off date for public domain status) is not available in at least one of the many digital databases across the globe, including the scholarly resources of Early English Books Online (EEBO) and its 18th-century companion ECCO, the various European and American equivalents, the haphazard Google Books project, the extraordinary Internet Archive, or the ambitious Hathi Trust Digital Library. There are still frustrating gaps so that, for example, many of the Catholic responses to English Reformation publications were written by exiled recusants and printed abroad, in Latin, the European language of scholarship, and therefore tend not to be available in the UK digital book collections selected according to the Short Title Catalogue criterion of being in English or published in England. For example, a search on Nicholas Harpsfield will yield very few entries and one has to download an almost unreadable copy of his thousand-page *Sex Dialogi* from the Internet Archive, (perhaps included there under a misapprehension of its title). Even more regrettably, one needs online access to the Bibliotheque Nationale to download much of the significant

work of the 'Catholic Fox' Richard Verstegan, including his *Theatre of Cruelty* with its extraordinary martyrdom woodcuts as vivid as Foxe's.

I earlier mentioned the *Actes & Monuments* website and suggested that Foxe might be retrospectively regarded almost as a website organiser. The website makes available the texts of the four editions of *A&M* between 1563 and 1583. It was intended that considerable annotation and commentary would also be incrementally provided. Like many such web-based projects the work has not been, and perhaps never will be, completed. To include, for example, digitized versions of the original documents and records which Foxe claimed to reproduce, in order to enable a detailed assessment of his accuracy, would be technically possible but an immense task and perhaps largely pointless except for a very specialist user-base.

In any case, reading or consulting digital transcripts of the text of each printed page cannot match the impression of the relationship between text and woodcut image in the overall layout of the pages, still less reproduce the sheer impact of the size of the work. Simply handling my copy of the 1610 folio edition in its two enormous volumes, with the sequence of consecutive half-page woodcuts of papal arrogance concluding the first volume, and then the magnificent full-page woodcut of Henry VIII as the title page of the second volume, brings home both the scale and the overarching organisation of the work. On the other hand, actually reading that solidly bound copy obliges me to stand at an improvised lectern, whereas at least I can sit in an armchair with one of the eight volumes of the nineteen-century edition, however near to physical disintegration they now are after a mere hundred and eighty years.

Each mode has its disadvantages. Already in 1570 a reader of that edition may have been frustrated by references back to the 1563 edition unless they happened, expensively, to have both editions accessible, while the 1583 edition provided extensive cross-references incorrectly to the 1570 rather than the 1576 edition. And at the foundation of all digitised texts there is still an unreliable process of copying, however automated by optical character recognition.

printers

I began my account in this segment with John Day having to finance buying the paper for the *Actes and Monuments* even before the costs and labour of printing and distributing numerous individual copies. Paper printing, involving so much physical effort, is now increasingly replaced by digital forms of reproduction. But digitisation is not cost-less, and not only in financial terms. There is again the issue of salvaging the accumulated contents of a previous mode, as with the monastic libraries, but these efforts are now increasingly controlled by private companies, and even official state archives are effectively being privatised.

Online versions of 'history' can be edited, selectively revised, or simply erased, on the websites of political campaigns, religious organisations, and conspiracy peddlers, making deliberate falsification hard to check or remedy, as with the Brexit campaigns and Trump's tweets. While the internet, like digital bit-coin, is intrinsically extra-national in the way that even radio and television were not, raising issues of extra-territoriality which would have frustrated Cecil, and struggles over copyright control which would have astonished Gervase, the possibilities of effective complaint or calling to account of global tech companies are diminishing, as is the capacity to resist the dissemination of powerful partisan versions of our own 'history'.

One of the concluding incidents or anecdotes in the 1583 *A&M* concerns John Day's own printing shop (1583, p. 2135):

> *The story of one Drayner of Kent, commonly called Iustice Nyne hooles.*
>
> I may not in this place omit the tragedy of one Drayner of Smarden in the County of Kent, Esquire, who bearing grudge against one Gregory Doddes, Parson of the sayde towne, for reprouing his vicious lyfe, sent for hym by two men, which tooke hym & brought him before him, where he was had into a Parlour, as it were to breakfast. In which behinde þe doore he had placed one Roger Mathew secretly, to beare witnes what he shuld say, no more being in sight but þe sayd Drayner & one of hys men, who willed and perswaded him to speake freely his minde, for that there was not sufficient record of his wordes to hurt him.
>
> But the Lord kept his talke without perill, wherby the sayd Drayner sent hym to the next Iustice called M. George Dorell, who perceiuing it to be done more of malice than otherwise, deliuered him vpon sureties, to appeare at the next Sessions at Cant. and at length was banished the Countrey.
>
> This sayd Drayner afterward, being chosen Iustice, to shew himselfe diligent in seeking þe trouble of his neighbors, made in þe Rodeloft nyne hooles, that he might looke about the church in Masse tyme. In which place alway at the sacring therof, he would stand to see who looked not, or held not vp his hands therto: which persons so not doing, he would trouble & punish very sore. Wherby he purchased a name ther, & is called to this day Iustice nine holes: who now (God be thanked) is Iohn out of office, & glad of his neighbors good will.
>
> It so fell out, that since this was published, the sayde Drayner came to the Printers house, with other associate, demaunding: Is Foxe here? to whome aunswere was geuen, that maister Foxe was not within. Is the Printer within (quoth Drayner? It was aunswered, yea: Wherevpon being required to come vp into his house, was asked what his will was. Mary, sayth he, you haue printed me false in your booke: Why sayth the Printer is not your name M. Drayner, otherwise called Iustice nine

holes? It is false sayth he: I made but v. with a great Augure, and the Parson made the rest. It was answered: I haue not read that a Iustice shoulde make him a place in the Roode loft to see if the people held vppe theyr handes. He sayd where as you alleadge, that I did it to see who adored þe sacrament, or who not, it is vntrue: for I set as litle by it, as the best of you all. In deede sayth the Printer, so we vnderstand now, for you being at a supper in Cheapside among certaine honest company, and there burdened with the matter, sayd then, that you did it rather to looke vpon fayre wenches, then otherwise. He being in a great rage, sware to the purpose, saying: Can a man speake nothing, but you must haue vnderstanding therof? But sayth he, did I any man any hurt? It was aunswered, that hee meant litle good to M. Doddes aforesayd, especially procuring a secret witnesse behinde his doore, to catche some wordes that might tend to Doddes destruction. Whiche thing Drayner sware, as before, was not true.

To whom the printer replied, that it was most true, for that the party there secretly hidden, hath since vpon his knees, asking forgeuenesse for his intent, confessed the same to Doddes himselfe. I will hang that knaue sayth he: And so he departed in a rage: and since is deceased, whose death & order therof, I referre to the secret Iudge.

Apart from the last comment, this account could now be a somewhat scurrilous news item, a parable about the pervasiveness of the surveillance economy, a draft for a crafted short story, a soap opera episode, or finally an incidental glimpse into a workshop for the writing of history.

A marginal note informs us that the incident occurred in 1558. In the 1583 edition this anecdote appears as one item in a long account of 'the terrible end of persecutors of the gospel', a list which includes Emperors, Kings and Cardinals, judges, nobles and minor officials, and also otherwise unknown ordinary citizens of a different religious persuasion. In this context, at least there was no longer a distinction between the great and the ordinary, officers and other ranks, nor between the combatants and the civilians in what was becoming a religious war.

Antiquaries

The specific polemical issues which preoccupied Archbishop Parker's circle no longer shaped the dominant debates of historians in the seventeenth century, but writers associated with Canterbury Cathedral continued to play a role in the construction of 'history', if only because manuscripts appropriated from the Christ Church library were increasingly made available in printed editions.

In the days when I haunted second-hand book fairs, my hit-list of desirables included one especially elusive target, the only edition of

Eadmer's *Historia novorum* prior to the nineteenth century: *Eadmeri monachi Cantuariensis Historiae nouorum*, published in 1623. I finally found a suitably battered and therefore affordable copy. In 1621 the great English polymath John Selden was imprisoned in the Tower and spent part of his time there editing Eadmer's *Historia novorum.* He explicitly offered his edition as a model for how to edit mediaeval texts by including as contextual addenda a considerable range of previously unpublished ancillary documents, including, for example, the laws of William I and part of the agreement between monasteries, the *Concordia monachorum* of Archbishop Lanfranc. Since it was Selden's opposition to overweening royal power which had landed him in the Tower, one can appreciate why he considered it timely to put into print an account of a previous struggle over monarchical powers, though the exact reasons for Selden choosing to edit Eadmer remain unclear.

Selden was a younger member of a loosely connected group of scholars which included Sir Robert Cotton, Sir William Camden, Sir Henry Spelman, John Speed, and John Stow. The concerns which animated this 'Society of Antiquaries' were not so much theological disputes about the role of the papacy versus monarchical supremacy, but rather historical-legal inquiries into relations between the various estates of the realm, and in particular how far the rights of royalty were to be reconciled with those of Parliament. Some participants in those debates would confront the question of which side God was on, not in a dispute between Pope and King, but in a civil war in which a central issue was the right and power of the monarchy itself. What might today seem merely antiquarian investigations had directly contemporary political resonance.

A century later, in the 1720s, the collected works of Selden himself were edited by David Wilkins, librarian at Lambeth Palace and a prependary Canon of Canterbury Cathedral, who also published an edition of Anglo-Saxon laws, *Leges Anglo-Saxonicae ecclesiasticae et civiles* (1721), and the records of English ecclesiastical synods and councils in the massive four-volume *Concilia Magnae Britanniae et Hiberniae* (1737), replacing and supplementing an earlier collection by Henry Spelman.

By then several generations of scholars had published editions of mediaeval historians, following on from the versions of Matthew Paris and of the so-called Matthew of Westminster sponsored by Archbishop Parker. For example, Sir Henry Savile's 1596 collection *Rerum Anglicarum scriptores post Bedam,* printed for the first time the chronicles of William of Malmesbury, Henry of Huntindon, Roger of Hoveden. Three substantial volumes were edited by William Fulman and Thomas Gale, *Rerum Anglicarum Scriptorum Veterum* (1684), *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores Quinque* (1687), *Historiae Britannicae, Saxonicae, Anglo-Danicae Scriptores XV* (1691). In the 1690s another Canon of Canterbury, Henry Wharton, compiled a two-volume *Anglia Sacra* including excerpts from several Christ Church historians, while an unfinished third volume *Historia de episcopis & decanis*

continued a concern with the issue of episcopal succession, a project expanded by John Le Neve's *Fasti Ecclesiae Anglicanae: Or, an Essay towards deducing a Regular Succession of all the Principal Dignitaries in each Cathedral, College Church or Chapel . . . From the first Erection thereof, to this Present Year 1715.*

There was also a smouldering debate over the dissolution of the monasteries and in particular the legal title to appropriated monastic lands. The enormous volumes published by Roger Dodsworth and William Dugdale from the 1650s onwards, the *Monasticon Anglicanum*, which printed lists of the charters and other entitlement documents of the dissolved monasteries, prompted concerns that those who now owned previously monastic lands and rights to tithes were vulnerable to legal challenges, a fear also prompted by Spelman's extraordinary *The History and Fate of Sacrilege* which tried to show that those who had inherited such properties were liable to divine retribution. Though Spelman wrote the study between 1612 and 1634 attempts to publish it even posthumously were variously thwarted, by official disapproval and editorial caution, until it finally appeared in 1698.

There were also several attempts to make the raw material of archives more easily available, as for example in the 1631 *The Repertorie of Records* with a 'brief introductive index of the records of the Chancery and Tower'. In 1622 the first Professor of modern history at Oxford, Degory Wheare, gave an inaugural lecture entitled *De Ratione et Methodo Legendi Historias*, expanded and published in 1623 and eventually given an English translation in 1685 as *The Method and Order for Reading both Civil and Ecclesiastical Histories*, predominantly concerned with classical historians but with a section on British texts. Aimed at a market of gentlemen readers rather than scholars, William Nicolson produced a survey of English historians: *The English Historical Library. In Three Parts. Giving A Short View and Character of most of our Historians either in Print or Manuscript: With an Account of our Records, Law-Books, Coins, and other Matters Serviceable to the Undertakers of a General History of England* (1714). By the 1720s the earlier phase of this development had itself become the subject of antiquarian interest, with the publication by Thomas Hearne of a selection of surviving papers from the meetings of the Elizabethan society of antiquaries, entitled *A Collection Of Curious Discourses* (1720).

This range of concerns with historical sources, and the provision of archival and other materials for writing history, indicated only very selectively here, has itself been the subject of a number of modern accounts, including for example David Douglas' highly readable *English Scholars* (1939), Graham Parry, *The Trophies of time: English antiquarians of the seventeenth century* (1995), Rosemary Sweet, *Antiquaries,* (2004), and many others.

While bearing this overall context in mind, however, I am again not primarily concerned with tracing the actual development of English historical writing but with some second-order issues, which might be

broadly indicated as the relationship between texts, images, and objects. I want to focus on one figure in particular, the Canterbury historian William Somner. As it happens, the life of Somner by White Kennett, appended to a posthumous edition (1693) of Somner's treatise on *Roman Ports and Forts in Kent*, almost incidentally provided a near-contemporary account of the extensive 17th- century network of English historians and antiquarians, many of them country gentlemen based in Kent, and included a somewhat dispiriting survey of the many abortive attempts to write exhaustive histories of counties or to assemble comprehensive collections for histories of cities and even cathedrals which remained incomplete and unfinished through the death of their ambitious authors.

WILLIAM SOMNER

William Somner made a significant contribution to the development of historical scholarship. Almost all the editions of mediaeval historians were of authors who wrote in Latin, a language in which most educated readers in the seventeenth century would still have been reasonably competent, but only in its classical form. Few readers would have been familiar with mediaeval Latin vocabulary and still less with Anglo-Saxon. As part of the polemic against mediaeval Catholic doctrines, Archbishop Parker's group had commissioned the special fonts required to print Anglo-Saxon characters in the volume entitled *A Testimonie of Antiquity,* a collection of sermons and other texts to illustrate theological views on the Eucharist and similar matters. Seventeenth-century interest in Anglo-Saxon texts focused more widely on laws and institutions, particularly in their relation to the disjuncture of the Norman Conquest, and a competence in Anglo-Saxon was becoming increasingly desirable for any serious historian of England.

In 1652, the Kent politician and scholar Sir Roger Twysden edited a composite volume of works by ten mediaeval historians, which for the first time printed some of Gervase's writings. The *Historiae Anglicanae Scriptores Decem* included eighty folio pages of a *Glossarium* by William Somner, providing a dictionary of mediaeval rather than classical Latin terms and usages. In 1655 the first volume of the Dugdale *Monasticon* appeared, to which Somner contributed transcripts of charters from Christ Church and Saint Augustine's Abbey together with translations into Latin of the Saxon originals.

Eventually, in 1659 Somner published his long-awaited *Dictionarium Saxonico-Latino-Anglicum* in two substantial volumes which included a version of Aelfric's Saxon grammar, providing for the first time accessible printed aids for reading Anglo-Saxon. Though Parker's assistant John Joscelyn had left a manuscript draft of an Anglo-Saxon dictionary, partly based upon a previous manuscript by Laurence Nowell, copies of which had circulated among scholars, it was Somner's *Glossarium* and *Dictionarium*

which made pre-Norman sources increasingly readable and laid the foundations for such later investigations as George Hickes's magnificently sprawling *Linguarum Veterum Septentrionalium Thesaurus Grammatico-Criticus et Archaeologicus* (1703-5).

The pioneering scholar Elizabeth Elstob has left a pleasant recollection of giving classes in Anglo-Saxon to the wives of clergy living in the Canterbury cathedral precincts, printed in the preface addressed to Hickes in her *The Rudiments Of Grammar for the English-Saxon Tongue,* published in 1715:

> Sir, soon after the Publication of the Homily on St. Gregory, I was engaged by the Importunity of my Friends, to make a Visit to Canterbury, as well to enjoy the Conversations of my Friends and Relations there, as for that Benefit which I hoped to receive from Change of Air, and freer Breathing, which is the usual Expectation of those, who are used to a sedentary Life and Confinement in the great City, and which renders such an Excursion now and then excusable. In this Recess, among the many Compliments and kind Expressions, which their favourable Acceptance of my first Attempt in Saxon, had obtained for me from the Ladies, I was more particularly gratified, with the new Friendship and Conversation, of a young Lady, whose Ingenuity and Love of Learning, is well known and esteem'd, not only in that Place, but by your self: and which so far indear'd itself to me, by her promise that she wou'd learn the Saxon Tongue, and do me the Honour to be my Scholar, as to make me think of composing an English Grammar of that Language for her use.

In 1701 Thomas Benson published an affordable abridgement of Somner's dictionary, by then becoming difficult to find, and similar aids soon followed. Until quite recently every under-graduate studying English literature at Oxford has been obliged to take compulsory Anglo-Saxon. Perhaps only a few have been suitably grateful for the privilege, and they can blame William Somner above all.

Anglo-Saxon

What interests me at the moment is the occasionally somewhat odd status of printed Anglo-Saxon texts, with some implications for how we think about and represent history more generally. That Somner provided translations into Latin of the relatively few Saxon charters printed in full in Dugdale's volumes indicates that most readers were not expected to be able actually to read the originals but they were made available to those few who could. When Parker printed a selection of translations attributed to King Alfred, in *Ælfredi Regis res gestæ,* one of the texts was printed in Anglo-Saxon characters but the Latin versions were also printed using the same unfamiliar fonts, so that a curious hybrid text was produced, the function of

which was to make the Latin appear as authentically ancient writing. When Foxe included several pages in Anglo-Saxon characters in the *Actes and Monuments* only a minute number of his intended readers would have been able even to recognise its alphabet (which Foxe helpfully provided). That they were so printed operated primarily as a sign or assertion of their authenticity and historicity, in effect acting as a visible witness that an original actually existed, though it was to be read in English.

Only quite rarely, as in Somner's own treatise on *Gavelkind*, was a Saxon text printed with an interlineated modern English version, while the usual practice of providing a more or less corresponding Latin translation could hardly have enabled readers easily to follow the syntax, grammar, or even vocabulary of the original text. In effect, for most readers the Anglo-Saxon characters were expected to register as indicative of 'antiquity' rather than as a text to be understood.

The writing (quite literally) of history has predominantly consisted, as we have seen, of making a further contribution to already existing texts, by composing a narrative made up of direct quotations and paraphrased summaries of previous written sources, or perhaps compiling an argument based upon the deployment of citations and excerpts from previous authors. So Gervase expanded or compressed his own accounts while his successors physically added their own writings to further sections of the actual manuscripts of his chronicles. Eadmer at some point composed his own notes and reminiscences into two separate narratives by selecting rather different versions of Anselm's life in order to present contrasting facets of his character and achievements. In the case of both Becket and Anselm we might now feel that we are 'closer' to the 'actual' person in reading their extant letters, or Anselm's prayers, but we may regard these as, in one sense, only the raw materials for a 'history' or biography. Modern historians who try to tell the story of Thomas Becket still weave together their preferred selections from the several contemporary written descriptions of his life and death. Foxe's mammoth work incorporates numerous existing texts, extracts from patristic writers and church historians, memoirs and letters from recent martyrs, works by other authors such as Bale, in order to construct an overwhelming case mainly composed of a complex tissue of others' writings.

In all these modes, what we are presented with are texts which have to be read, understood, interpreted, and in many cases translated. The past is made present through a process of imaginative comprehension based upon being able actually to read the text in front of us, albeit in translation. Yet, as we saw in the case of Becket's murder, though we can be sure that something definite and specific happened in the cloisters, at the doorway, and on the steps where he died, what precisely occurred cannot now be reconstructed or told with complete confidence. The actual event in all its details remains elusive and even opaque since past historical events simply do not exist to be witnessed any more. The event was not itself a text to be

read, yet it could perhaps plausibly be visually represented, in a variety of media, as an image, a picture, an illustration, but thereby decisions about the actions, positions, and gestures of the figures depicted were more or less conscientiously or arbitrarily 'fixed' by the artist. The same was true for Foxe's vivid images of dying martyrs: whatever the contentious competing narratives, the pictures ostensibly showed the event 'as it was'.

A cathedral is neither an event nor a text. However, as we have been indirectly exploring, to physically enter the cathedral is for many people to experience something they might call 'entering history'. We have considered different aspects or implications of that phrase, in relation to an awareness that this building is or includes a cemetery of the dead, and that at various times people who wrote 'history' have lived and worked in its environs. I want now to turn directly to some attempts to write the history of this particular cathedral before returning to more elusive issues. It is worth asking: 'what is a history of a cathedral a history *of*?'

I will return later to an element I briefly acknowledged: that particularly in the case of Foxe's *Monuments* what was more important and impressive for many readers than the writing were the images. These were included, I suggest, not simply as 'illustrations' of the text but almost as reconstructed 'eye-witnesses' to the events narrated, transforming those events almost into physical objects, the printed woodcuts and engravings themselves, which could be examined with a different kind of attention from that involved in attending to a text. Foxe's pages in Anglo-Saxon operated much like those images of the martyrs at their moment of death, as a palpable re-presenting of the historical past, not to be read but to be looked at and contemplated. Many of us now might regard those weighty seventeenth-century Latin editions, or even a Latin inscription on a tomb, with something of the same attitude, and even printing quotations with seventeenth century capitalisation may prompt a similar impression.

The Antiquities of Canterbury

Perhaps as important a precedent for future developments as the Anglo-Saxon dictionary itself, Somner published in 1640 what was arguably the first local history of a provincial city printed in England, *The Antiquities of Canterbury*, or to give its full title:

> The Antiquities of Canterbury. Or a survey of that ancient citie, with the suburbs, and cathedrall. Containing principally matters of *Antiquity* in them all. Collected chiefly from old *Manuscripts, Lieger-bookes*, and other like *Records*, for the most part, never as yet Printed. With an *Appendix* here annexed: wherein (for better satisfaction to the learned) the *Manuscripts*, and *Records* of chiefest consequence, are faithfully exhibited. All (for the honour of that *ancient Metropolis*, and his good

affection to *Antiquities*) Sought out and Published by the Industry, and Goodwill of William Somner.

William Somner was born in 1606, and attended the King's School in the cathedral precincts but at the age of thirteen he was apprenticed to his father, also William Somner, who was then Registrar of the Canterbury Consistory Court, and since the accumulating archives of the court were apparently kept in the family house, at 5 Castle Street, he could largely work from home.

By 1623 the younger William was already a Notary Public and by 1638 Proctor of the Consistory Court. His father died in 1637 but the various local archives may have stayed at the house in Castle Street even though William did not immediately succeed as Registrar. He published the *Antiquities of Canterbury* in 1640 when he was thirty-four. After a precarious time as a known Royalist during the Commonwealth, at the Restoration in 1660 Somner was made the Auditor or accountant of the Dean and Chapter, and then joint Registrar, and also appointed pastor of St John's Hospital outside the Northgate. He died in 1669, attended, it seems, by a doctor named John Bale. His life and career had been markedly local in scope, though for a few years during the interregnum, in support of his work on the great dictionary, he received part of the stipend which was assigned to the Readership in Anglo-Saxon at Cambridge established by Henry Spelman, though Somner never took up the actual appointment.

In 1693 White Kennett wrote, in his *Life of Mister Somner*, that::

> Mr Somner . . prosecuted the duties of his office with prudence and integrity . . and, when he had any hours reliev'd from the business of his calling, those he devoted to his beloved search into the mysteries of time . . He loved much, and much frequented the Cathedral service; where after his devotions were paid, he had a new zeal for the honour of the House, walking often in the Nave, and in the more recluse parts, not in that idle and inadvertent posture, nor with that common and trivial discourse, with which those open Temples are vulgarly profaned: but with a curious and observant eye, to distinguish the age of the buildings, to sift the ashes of the dead; and in a word to eternize the memory of things and men. His visits within the City were to find out the Ancestors, rather than the present inhabitants; and to know the genealogy of houses, and walls, and dust. When he had leisure to refresh himself in the suburbs and the fields it was not merely for digestion, and for air; but to survey the British bricks, the Roman walls, the Danish hills and works, the Saxon Monasteries and the Norman Churches. At the digging up foundations, and other descents into the bowels of the earth, he came often to survey the workmen; and to purchase from them the treasure of coins, Medals, and other buried

> reliques, of which he informs us, that many were found in almost all parts of the City, some of which came to his hands.

Kennett's emphasis on Somner's 'curious and observant eye' and his interest in 'the Ancestors rather than the present inhabitants' and 'the genealogy of houses' are comments worth noting.

Nicholas Battely in the preface to his 1703 revised edition of the *Antiquities* provides a different context for the 1640 publication:

> Mr William Sumner collected the Antiquities of Canterbury in a time of peace, while (as yet) the church flourished under the government of King Charles I and under the conduct of Archbishop Laud, to whose patronage he dedicated this work, which he published anno 1640. But before this year was ended, a dismal storm did arise, which did shake and threaten with a final overthrow the very foundations of this church: for upon the feast of the epiphany, and the Sunday following, was a riotous disturbance raised by some disorderly people, in the time of divine service, in the choir of this church: and although by the care of the prependaries a stop was put to these disorders for a time, yet afterwards the madness of the people did rage, and prevail beyond resistance. The venerable Dean and Canons were turned out of their stalls, the beautiful and new erected font was pulled down, the inscriptions, figures, and coats of arms, engraven upon brass were torn off from the ancient monuments; and whatever there was of beauty or decency in the whole place, was despoiled by the outrages of sacrilege and profaneness. During those distractions of our church and state, this book was so disagreeable to the then prevailing powers, as that the best fate which the book or its author could at that time expect, was to lie hid, and to be sheltered under the security of being not regarded.

In fact, Somner's book inadvertently contributed to the ideological conflict by providing the Puritan Richard Culmer with a handy guide-book for iconoclastic destruction in the cathedral a year or so after its publication. As we will see, Culmer too had an observant eye for the physical aspects of the Cathedral, including the images in sculptures and windows. I have previously mentioned the destructive assault by Colonel Sandys' troops in 1642. In 1655 William Dugdale was to publish his account of Saint Paul's Cathedral as an insurance against what by then he feared might be a total destruction by the Puritans of the London cathedral. In the event, Dugdale's book became the only comprehensive account of the mediaeval Saint Paul's when it was instead destroyed in the great fire of 1666.

Somner's own explicit intention, outlined in his preface, recalls Kennett's phrase 'search into the mysteries of time', and articulates concerns we have encountered about theological notions of the after-life, offering a meditative appreciation of the role of memory, memorials, and history:

> It is the observation of some ancient philosophers (who also prove it by diverse good arguments) that all men, for the most part, have a natural desire to immortality. But this we all know by common approved experience, that man that is born of a woman is of short continuance. He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down, he flieth also as a shadow and continueth not. Some therefore who knew not of any other world after this, in defence of nature's ways and providence, maintained, that she had in some manner satisfied the desire of men in making him generative for that man in some sort may be thought yet alive, whose progeny is living . . and if there be any immortality in this, it can be but an immortality of the body, not of the mind, the best and chiefest part of man. The immortality of the mind (all that it is capable of in this world, which though it be not immortality properly, yet may certainly much conduce to allay the complaints of mortal men concerning the shortness of life) doth, as I conceive, especially depend from that remembrance of things past, and foresight of things to come . . he certainly that knows no more of the world (the time of a man's life being so short as it is) than what has happened in his time though he may be in years, and perchance very old in regard of his body, yet in regard of his mind and knowledge, he can be accounted but a very child. . . I do not see (if knowledge be granted to be the life of the soul, as the soul is the life of the body) but he may reckon his years according to the proportion of his knowledge, accounting himself to have lived so many years, as he is able truly and historically to give an account of.

The passage makes curiously convoluted claims concerning the relationship between the body and soul in relation to history and immortality, with knowledge of the past allied to 'mind' and thereby elevated above mere bodily continuity and genealogy. Yet when Somner turns his attention to the actual practice of the writing of history the emphasis falls rather upon physical persistence and patchy material survival.

His own book is presented not simply as a way of recalling or narrating the past, but almost of conserving or preserving it, not least by including the actual records and by registering the persistence of physical components of that past.

> This work is chiefly collected from old manuscripts, leiger-books, and other records of credit, exhibited to me for the most part by the Treasury of our Cathedral, which as it exceeds most of the realm, if not all, in beauty, stateliness and magnificence of building, so in this particular kind of unvaluable treasure, is, as I conceive, inferior unto none. With the help of Spot's History of Canterbury, mentioned of Balaeus [John Bale], and of John Twine's collections of the antiquities thereof, spoken of by him in his commentaries *De rebus Albionicis*, etc,

> could I but have gotten them, I should perchance have brought the work to more perfection; with the helps I have had, I have done my best endeavour that nothing might be strange or unknown that carries with it any show of antiquity, either in the church, (as the most eminent place all) or in the city and suburbs thereof.

The book was partly indebted to the model of Stow's *The Survay of London: containing the . . antiquitie, . . Rule and gouernment . . memorable monuments, and other. . Obseruations, both in and about the same citie. Written in the yeere 1598*. Somner considers, in an order similar to Stow's, the overall antiquity of the city, then its walls, ditches, and defences, the wards and parish churches, and the organisation of ecclesiastical and 'temporal' or civic government. Somner includes a lengthy treatment of the cathedral, providing an example of what was to become almost a genre in itself. In doing so, he presents us with an intricate interweaving of textual records and material evidences, not so much a narrative of past events as a composite reconstruction of legible layers of the existing present.

In particular, by providing a substantial 'Appendix' of archive documents Somner was following Selden's exemplary practice in the edition of Eadmer. The appendix prints versions of dozens of documents, especially charters and legal agreements selected from the city and cathedral records which were Somner's professional responsibility. These included, for example, a charter of King Offa, an Act of Parliament for paving the streets, a list of Kent manors belonging to the Archbishop and monks of Canterbury as recorded in the Domesday book, an excerpt from the *Life of Saint Alphege* written by Osbern, an account of Saxon trial procedures, and a dozen pages describing in detail the pictorial content of twelve windows in the Cathedral. The appendix takes up nearly a quarter of the whole volume. As himself effectively the custodian of these local records Somner would have had no difficulty in accessing them or problem in publishing them, unlike those of his contemporaries trying at some considerable expense to research chaotic State records in the Tower or the Crown Courts.

evidences

Since I am not myself writing a history of Canterbury or of the cathedral, I want only to focus on several specific passages in the 1640 text, with, I hope, an observant eye as to how Somner's text is actually composed and his 'history' constructed. For example, Somner writes (p. 6):

> When Canterbury was first enclosed with a wall, I think, is no where to be found in story, or other record, either private or publick. Tokens of the walls good antiquitie are the British bricks, to be seen at Ridinggate, at the gate also now done up, sometime leading from the Castle-yard to Wencheape, and at Queningate, or rather (if you will) at

> the place in the wall, where once the gate so called stood, and is now also made up. But in greatest plenty, upon the bank on either side the River behinde S. Mildreds Church in the remaines of the wall there. And that the City was walled in before the Norman conquest, is evident by the testimonie of Roger Hoveden who relating the siege and surprisall of the Citie by the Danes, in the time of King Etheldred, Anno Christi 1011, tells us, that (amongst particulars of the Danish crueltie, wreaked on the poore English people of the Citie) many of them being by the Danes cast headlong from the wall of the Citie met with death in the precipice. This may be further proved by severall Records of our Cathedrall, making mention of this wall in the English-Saxons time.

Here the dating of the wall depends primarily upon the evidence of the bricks which his contemporary local readers could easily go and inspect for themselves, supplemented by citing an incident in Hoveden's *Chronicle* (printed in Savile's 1596 collection) and a general reference to the archives in the Cathedral. That the Danes attacked the city in 1011 is here subordinate in interest to the incidental evidence for the existence of the city wall, indicated almost parenthetically by the particular way in which some unfortunate citizens were slaughtered.

Somner finds more direct archive evidence in an actual set of measurements from the reign of Henry III (p. 13):

> I finde that the yeare before (3. Hen. 4.) the compasse and circuit of the Wall was measured, and a note thereof taken and registred in the Records of the Chamber. Let me present you with the Copy of it, in the identity of words and language that I finde it.
> *Mensuratio murorum circa Civitatem Cant' per Thomam Ickham honorablem Civem Civitatis praedict' fact. Ann. Reg. Hen. tertio.*

Somner prints the entire Latin entry and then adds a comment concerning its compiler:

> This Thomas Ickham, by the way, the Wall measurer, was Alderman of Burgate in the fourth yeare of Hen. 4. and dying the twenty sixe of May. 3. Hen. 5. was buried in Christ-Church. Others of his name and family, (I take it) lye buried in Saint Peters Church in Canterbury, as I shall show hereafter.

Again, a minor detail from one archive source cross-connects with another, and though the fate of Thomas Ickham would matter little to most readers, and not much at all to those outside Canterbury, it might well have resonated for those contemporaries attending Saint Peter's parish church in 1640.

The details which follow would also make little sense to anyone not already familiar with the city, but the local reader is again invited to go and look at the wall itself, rather in the way that Gervase could invite his readers to consult his other chronicles in their shared monastic library:

> By this Record you may perceive that the whole Wall betweene Westgate and Northgate was not then built, as now we see it is. For on either side the River, the Wall, by this Record, clearely breakes off, so that there is an interjected distance of eighteene perches long betweene the one, and the other Wall. And indeed it will easily appeare to be but a slight observation; that so much of the Wall as stands and is made up in that then un-walled part, namely betweene the Posterne and the Waterlocke, next Northgate, through which in Arches, with a Portclose, the River now passeth from Abbots Mill, is in the stoneworke much different from the rest of the Wall, and shewes not in any part the least wracke or decay, as the other doth. It seemes then that Archbishop Sudbury built not all the long Wall.

Included in the volume was a schematic birds-eye street map of the city, showing the walls, with seventy or so locations or buildings indicated in an alpha-numerical table, but this map is now rarely present in surviving copies of the 1640 book. As with Foxe's lurid wood-cuts, the map has acquired a certain independent and extractable value.

When his itinerary around the walls reaches Canterbury Castle Somner quotes several Latin phrases from 'an ancient deed recorded in the Lieger Booke of Eastbridge Hospitall' to clarify the relationship between the castle, a gate, and a bridge, and adds an entry from 'Crowne-Rolles. A. 15. Ed. 2.' which is at the same time official historical evidence and an incidental anecdote concerning another past local citizen:

> This Gate had its usuall Porter or Keeper. For I read that one William Savage, *Ianitor Portae Castri Cant.* was questioned for taking the daughter of Hamon Trendherst, *vi & armis, ex opposito Castri Cant. in Cant.* and carrying her into the Castle, and there holding her eight dayes and upwards. (p. 33)

To establish that the castle was not, as sometimes alleged, built by William the Conqueror he cites evidence from the Domesday book, and then sketches incidents in which the Castle had figured, for example 'certaine of the Monkes of St. Augustine, quitting the Abbey in the broyle betweene Archbishop Lanfranc and them, about Guido or Wido the 42. Abbat, sheltered themselves under, or within this Castle' (p. 34) – hardly an episode in history familiar to non-Canterbury readers. To clarify the meaning of the word 'Barbican' he cites Chaucer's use of the word to denote a 'watchtower' and appeals rather dubiously to 'the Saxon *Ber-ic-ken.*:

I ken or see the Borough' (p. 36), perhaps relying upon local knowledge of 'the Borough' as (still) referring to a specific Canterbury area. To establish the precise location of the 'Barbican' he characteristically adduces incidental evidence embedded in an apparently inconsequential episode recorded in the city archives:

> The place where it was, comes next to be inquired. I have seene a record of the 6. of Ed. 2. purporting that the City-Coroner coming to doe his office upon the dead Body of a murdered servant of the Prior of Christ-Church: he was not permitted, but the body being conveyed to the Barbecan, *extra Castrum Cant.* was there set upon and searched by a forreigne Coroner. Now it must of necessity follow that this place where the inquest was taken (the Barbecan) was without the Cities liberty: but there is not neare the Castle any place, save the Castle-yard, that is so.

Here he refers the reader to the appendix of original records (which takes up pages 376 to 516): 'The Record (if you please to see it) is extant in my Appendix, pag. 298' *[sic]*. Despite the mis-pagination, it is not quite an invitation to come and consult the original at 5 Castle Street.

Saint Augustine's

When he considers Saint Augustine's Abbey (p. 45ff) he divides his account into two sections, the first concerning the foundation of the monastery and its estates, as recorded in several charters which he prints at length, but he acknowledges that the sheer scale of the extant archives mean that 'it would be too tedious a matter to particularize but the one halfe of the donations and grants of lands and revenues that were made and given by the multitude of benefactors of all sorts', so offers only a truncated list of the royal benefactors, taken from Thorne's *Chronicle* (which Twysden was later to include in the *Decem Scriptores*):

> King Eadbald his sonne and next Successor, who gave the mannor of Northborne, consisting of 30 plough-lands. King Lothaire, who gave 3 plough-lands in Stodmersh. King Withred, who gave the mannor of Littleborne of 5 plough-lands. King Eadbert his sonne, who gave 6 plough-lands in Little-Mongeham. King Edmund, whose gift was 2 plough lands in Sybertsweld. Kenewulf King of Mercia and Cuthred King of Kent, who gave the mannor of Lenham, consisting of 20 plough-lands and 13 Denes. King Ethelwulf the West-Saxon, who gave 40 Caslatos (Mansions I take it) in Lenham. King Ethelhert the West-Saxon also, who gave the mannor of Merton in East Kent, of 3 plough-lands. King Canute, who together with the body of S. Mildred the

> virgin of Thanet, gave unto the Abbey all the indowment of that late Monastery. King Edgar who gave Plumsted, of 4 plough lands. Edward the Confessor, who gave all the land he had in Fordwich.

Tedious as this list is, a Kent reader would need no gloss or map to locate these place-names, or to appreciate the extent to which Saint Augustine's Abbey had been dependent upon these well-worked agricultural lands. Somner admits that he will not 'wade or enter farre into discourse of the once flourishing estate of this ancient Abbey, lest I finde it (as I may justly feare it) even endlesse' and he is well aware of the sheer quantity of physical papers and parchments which were not simply a record but were once the actual legal validations of those donations. As this Notary Public was well aware, these original charters were not primarily texts recording the past but, at least until the dissolution, physical objects to be produced in legal evidence of current ownership.

The second segment concerning Saint Augustine's is 'a survey of the present remains of it' and this is preceded by a paragraph on the dissolution which had lead to the present ruinous condition of the Abbey (p. 59):

> I do not remember that I have read of or met with any other much considerable losse, crosse or misfortune to have befallen this Abbey afterwards, untill that fatall blow of utter dissolution was given it by *Hen.* 8. Little had all the former casualties been to the ruine of this goodly Abbey, had not that sudden and tempestuous storm (which bare down before it all the religious structures of this kinde throughout the kingdome) falling upon it, brought this with the rest, to irrecoverable ruine: whose uncovered walls stood so languishing in time, and storms of weather, that dayly increased the aspect of her ruines, till now lastly they are made subject to other publick uses, and the whole tract of that most goodly foundation in the same place no where appearing &c. as it is in *Speed* .

Somner here gives a reference to John Speed's *History of England* but the primary evidence is the obvious ruination visible to any Canterbury citizen. That Saint Augustine's Abbey is located almost immediately outside the city walls has meant that for several centuries, from the dissolution to the present day, the extensive ruins of one monastery have been almost directly juxtaposed with the remaining once-monastic structures and splendid edifice of the still flourishing Christ Church Cathedral, each separated from the other by the short length of a single street, Saint Paul Lane, an unmissable visible reminder of a disjuncture in the history not just of the city but of the country.

Somner's account of the 'remains' of Saint Augustine's takes the rhetorical form of an accompanied walk and a local reader could well have strolled his actual path with a copy of the book to hand (p. 60f):

> Yet thither let me leade you, and have your patience whilest I survey the present Remains of the place, which is my second Particular touching this Abbey. . .
> . . . Now enter we the sept, where the first thing in our eye observable (except the faire Hall, the late Refectory of the Monkes) is *Ethelberts* Tower. Not so called (as vulgar tradition will fabulously tell you it was) from the building of it, either by him, or by others in his time. In honor and memory of him I will grant it was, but yet long since his dayes, being not built (I take it) untill about the yeare 1047. For (as it is in the private Chronicler, *Thorne)* the then Archbishop *Eadsin,* beside some other acts of his bounty to the Abbey, gave 100. markes, *ad turris aedificationem, quae tunc fuerat in construendo,* meaning this Tower, as I conceive. Other certainty of the age of it, I cannot give, and so leave it with the words of *Speed*, who in the close of his discourse touching this Abbey, thus speakes of it. Onely *Ethelberts* Tower (saith he) in memory and honour of the man, as yet hath escaped the verdict and sentence of destruction, whose beauty, though much defaced and overworne, will witnesse to succeeding Ages the magnificence of the whole, when all stood compleate in their glory together. . .
>
> Now being upon taking our leave of the Abbey and making our retraict, let me lead you (as the next way out) over the forgotten sepulchres of the dead, the ancient cemetery ground of the Abbey, and so out of the gate before Burgate.

Here the remark from Speed operates as providing an intermediary layer between Somner's own present view and a memory of the magnificence of the Abbey which was already only vicarious for Speed himself.

Somner proceeds with an account of the various wards in the suburbs of the city, including a brief comment on Saint Martin's Church (p. 64), which both cites Bede's text and again notes the evidence of the still visible brickwork:

> The next thing after this Abbey, in the Suburbs, which I shall servey, is the Church of S^t^ *Martin,* much celebrated both for the great antiquity of it, and also for the resort of *Augustine* and his fellow-labourers thither to their devotions at their first arivall, by the licence of King *Ethelbert,* imparted to them in favour of Queene *Berta* his wife (a Christian, and descended of Christian parentage, being the daughter of *Chilperike* King of *France)* to whom this Church built long before, to wit (as *Bede* saith) by the Romans, as some say in King *Lucius* dayes, and dedicated to S^t^ *Martin,* was permitted for the place of her publicke devotions. The Church indeed seemes very ancient, being built (the Chancell especially)

mostly of British or Romane bricke, the noted reliques and tokens of old Age in any kinde of building whether sacred or profane.

the chiefest glory

At page 150 Somner finally comes to what he describes as 'the thing which I count the chiefest glory both of the city and of my present survey thereof' – the Cathedral. His treatment of the cathedral, which takes about sixty pages is divided into five sections which he specifies:

> For my more methodicall proceeding, much being to be said of this Metropolitane Church, my whole discourse thereof shall be referred to these heads.
> 1. The antiquity of the foundation, and the nature thereof.
> 2. The historie of the Churches Fabrick.
> 3. A survey of the present Church, with the monuments therein, as also of the more ancient buildings throughout the Praecinct both of it and the Palace, with the *Ambitus,* or Praecinct it self.
> 4. A Catalogue of the principall Benefactors to the Church.
> 5. A catalogue of
>   1. Archbishops of the church
>   2. Priors
>   3. Archdeacons.

He continues:

> To begin with the first. The Antiquity and nature of the foundation. In the former of which I shall be brief, that so I may not *dictum dicere,* and make no needlesse repetitions of what others, many others, for even vulgar satisfaction, have already said upon the point, as *Bede, Parker, Cambden, Lambert;* a few of the many that have largely and worthily written hereof. It may not be expected, nor will it (I conceive) become me, *post tot Homeros scribere Iliada.* Neither can I in this matter say what is not vulgarly known already.

Although Somner acknowledges his sources as in effect also his predecessors in terms of content, his own 'methodicall proceeding' or ordered outline was to become with little variation the formal model and template for later accounts of this and soon other cathedrals.

Two different modes of historical account are explicitly involved: the chronological list of past successive office-holders, and the presently visible accumulation of physical materials, those of the fabric itself but also, at least indirectly, the local lands the donation of which had long financed both the building itself and the monastic way of life. Both may persist but in different ways, and to write about 'the cathedral', or Saint Augustine's or St

Martin's, is to compose a somewhat problematic combination or layering of at least two kinds of account and evidence upon each other, though for the sake of a 'methodical proceeding' they are distinguished and separated.

However, as Somner discusses the cathedral it becomes clear that he did not have access to some sources and manuscripts we can now take for granted, and he knew that his information was frustratingly incomplete and inadequate. Remember that in his preface, quoted above, he had complained that he could not locate the collection of notes on Canterbury mentioned in Twine's *De rebus Albionicis*, or find a copy of *Sprot's Chronicle* mentioned by John Bale, a reference we now know to be in any case misleading. But Somner does not seem to have had access even to a manuscript of Gervase (to be later published by Twysden in 1652). For example, he knows about the devastating fire in 1174 but only at third-hand (1640, p. 159):

> About forty years after that, vis., in the year 1174, I read of yet another combustion of this sacred edifice. At whose cost it recovered itself then, I find not…

In the 1703 edition Nicholas Battely at this point comments: 'In the supplement concerning this church, the reader may expect a full account of the rebuilding of it, and at whose charge it was done.' A page later Somner makes it clear that his knowledge of Gervase and the fire is only from the Catholic Nicholas Harpsfield's *Historia Anglicana ecclesiastica*, posthumously published in 1622 (1703, p. 89):

> Once indeed since, and that shortly after this exchange [of houses nestled close to the cathedral], it was in danger to be fired, but was preserved miraculously, if you will believe my author (Gervase, a monk of the place about that time) from whom Harpsfield makes this report of the matter: 'in the time of the Archbishop Richard who immediately succeeded Thomas Becket in the see of Canterbury, a fire did break out in the city and burnt many houses: it drew towards Christchurch. The monks were under great consternation. The danger seemed to be greater than human aid could prevent. They betake themselves to divine help, and particularly to the protection of Saint Owen, whose holy relics are with much assurance brought forth, and placed over against the flames; the success was wonderful: for the flame, as if it had been driven back by a divine power, retreated and made no further progress'.

I here use Battely's 1703 edition, which translates the passage from Harpsfield as a quotation or paraphrase from Gervase. Whether Somner endorses this somewhat miraculous view of events is unclear, but in 1640

he had no other facts to offer instead. By 1703 Battely had a printed Gervase text to hand.

The 1703 edition also shows that Somner had continued his researches, since Battely was able to incorporate notes and corrections made by Somner on his own personal copy of the *Antiquities*, by then in the Cathedral library, which are indicated by square brackets and Somner's initials (1703, p. 87f). The text almost becomes a palimpsest:

> This Church thus new built, and thus also enlarged fell again some say, by fire about the year 1130. But soon found such as pitied her misfortune, and took commiseration of her ruins: whereof Archbishop Corboyl is said to be the chief, who they say of his own Purse set it up again, and then after a most solemn manner did dedicate the same, in the presence of the King, the Queen, King David of Scots, most of the Bishops, and a great number of the Nobility of both Realms. [True it is that he solemnly performed the Rights of Dedication; that action is justly ascribed to him, but neither did he so reedify the Church, nor was there that occasion given for it (as the firing of it in his time) whereof my guides in the former edition, (the author of the *Antiq Britan.* Mr. *Cambden* and Bishop *Godwyn*) not without a clear mistake make mention. For the church (saith *Gervase* a monk of the place) was but only thrice burnt. . . .W.S]

As with the survey of Saint Augustine's, Somner uses the device of ostensibly accompanying his reader, and here he attempts to establish the comparative age of the choir, the nave, and the crypt by looking closely at the construction, but also deploys an indirect argument derived from his knowledge of Norman-French building techniques (1640, p. 168):

> Ascend we now by the steps or *Pulpitum* to the Quire (Chancell or Presbytery.) *Ad hunc conscenditur multis gradibus,* saith *Erasmus:* which whole work of the Quire, from end to end, I mean, from the Westerne doore thereof unto the Archiepiscopall throne or marble Chair behinde the high Altar, with the side-iles, crosse-iles and other buildings on both sides the Quire (the Quires curious Westerne doore-case onely excepted, built, I take it, about the time that the body was) together with the under-croft (or vaults) to them (except the Princes Chapell there) are much of an age; there is that harmonious symmetry and agreement betweene the parts. But certainly of what age I cannot define; onely confessing it farre elder then the Nave; I dare constantly and confidently deny it to be elder then the Norman conquest: because of the building of it upon Arches, a forme of Architecture though in use with and among the Romanes long before, yet after their departure not used here in England till the Normans brought it over with them (as I told you) from France. So that (I say) elder then the conquest this

> piece cannot be, and I dare not pronounce it, the roof of it at lestwise to be so old, because of the many combustions, betiding the fabrick since the Conquest. But by many inducements I am throughly perswaded that it is (for the main) the upper part of that new Church which *Lanfranc* first built, whereof I have treated sufficiently before. And so I have shortly done with the antiquity of this fabrick, the Quire.

Somner's constantly parenthetical argument here partly depends upon the appearance of 'harmonious symmetry' as well as his knowledge of Norman-French use of arches, but at this point Battely offers a further clarification and correction, relying mainly upon the now published Gervase (1703, p. 93):

> Mr Somner professes himself to be altogether at a loss concerning the age of the present choir with the undercroft and aisles or wings belonging to it. He writes here somewhat doubtfully: for he says, that the choir was built about the same time that the body was; and in the next sentence says, that it is far older than the nave; and he concludes, that he was fully persuaded, that it is (for the main) the same which Lanfranc built. But since Mr Somner collected his antiquities, Gervase being printed has given us a full light into this concern. The supplement will show the reader, that this present choir was finished about the year 1184, being built in the space of 10 years. That the body of the church was about 30 years in building, and finished after the year 1401. And so the choir is elder sister to the nave of church above 200 years.

Somner's own supporting evidence was often simply quotations from textual sources, including mediaeval and more recent historians as well as excerpts from the cathedral archives, but when he or Battely comments on how old specific parts of the building are, neither had a reliable way of establishing historical dates from direct observation or examination, as in the case of the two towers at the west end of the nave (1640, p. 165):

> Now that Steeple which you see at the West-end and South-side of the Church, is the Oxford-tower, or Dunstan-steeple I so lately spake of, and one of them. And the opposite one with the lofty spire or shaft covered with lead is the other, and the same that is said to be of Archbishop *Arundells* building, and at this day called by his name. But under correction, without warrant of truth, as I conceive, induced thereunto partly from the work of the Steeple which I hold elder then *Arundells* time, by comparing it with other pieces of that age, and partly by this note in the records of the Church, seeming to me by the Character almost as ancient as the time of *Arundell.*

In this case, of course, we cannot go and look for ourselves since precisely this tower was replaced in the 1830s. Battely, who could still observe the tower and steeple, offers a correction derived, it seems, from local lore (1703, p. 91):

> Concerning Angel Steeple, Mister Somner falls under a very great mistake. For the Steeple (which we now call Bell-Harry Steeple) was formerly called the Angel Steeple: and in this Steeple the five bells given by Archbishop Arundel were hanged. But afterward they were removed to the great steeple on the North corner of the west end of the church; whence it has been called Arundel steeple. Of this I will undertake to give a just and full account in the supplement .

Allow me just one more substantial quotation, a fairly typical passage from the 1703 edition's version (p. 94) of the 1640 text (at p. 170f), with both Somner's own characteristic parentheses and yet further inserted interventions by Nicholas Battely, and including several direct quotations from other sources:

> But leaving these things and the Quire too, let us now ascend. *From behind the high altar we go up as it were into another church by several steps* saith *Erasmus.* To this I proceed, the upper part of the Church (I mean) from the Grate between the Archiepiscopal throne or marble chaire, by the Mosaick or Musaick-work, upwards, called (from the standing of his Shrine there) *Beckets* Chapell: which, with the *vertex* of the work, called *Beckets* crown (intended by *Erasmus,* where he saith: There in a certain Chapel is to be seen the whole face of the Blessed Martyr set in gold and adorned with many jewels et cetera) the either side-Iles, (except the Chapell on the North-side, and the undercroft of it) I hold to be somewhat lesse ancient than the Quire and its undercroft: The ocular and peeked or pointed form of the Arch, the round marble Pillars or Columns both above and below (to passe by other disagreements easily observable) showing a manifest discrepancy and difference of one from the other. For truth is, about the place where the Quire ends and that Chapell begins (observe but the works above and underneath, and you will easily perceive it) the Church once ended, and extended no further, the Pillars and work coming in and closing there. [All the work at the East end of the church (except the Chapel of King Henry IV) is one entire building, of the same Age with the Quire finished about the year 1184, as will appear in the supplement. N.B.]
> The certain age of this part neither can I finde, but from great probability do conceive it to be that new work (whereof *Edmerus* speaks) begun and furthered by this Patron) Archbishop *Anselm,* but continued and consummated by *Ernulph* the Prior with the help of his Monks in *Hen.* I. time. A work that (as I told you erewhile) was so

envied of some about the King, and on the other side so much applauded and extolled by *William* the Monk of *Malmesbury,* who for the Windows, Pavement, and other Ornaments of it prefers it to any other in the whole kingdome. *The like* (saith he) *was not to be seen in England &c.* as before. Properties wherein it yet justly deserves the comparison. [The new work begun by Anselm, was not consummated by Prior Ernulph, but by his successor Conrad. This was the whole Quire together with all the East end of the Church, which Anno 1174 was burnt down to the ground, and within ten years was rebuilt, in the same beauty and stateliness, as is to be seen at this day. N.B.]

multi-layered

As these several quotations variously indicate, reading Somner's 1640 text in the 1703 edition, which includes not only Somner's own later corrections but also Battely's translations of Somner's Latin excerpts and his inserted comments on and corrections of Somner's original text, is a somewhat frustrating multi-layered experience. Moreover, the 'supplement' to which Battely refers is almost a complete extra volume, entitled *Cantuaria Sacra*, bound with the 1703 edition of Somner's work as 'The Second Part'. It consists of Battely's own investigations into Saint Augustine's Abbey and some other ecclesiastical buildings in Canterbury, based upon his further exploration of the archives of both city and cathedral. The main text of Battely's *Cantuaria Sacra*, as with Somner's own volume, is an interweaving of observation and quotation, and largely follows Somner's organisation of the material. The combined double volume also include a second Appendix of additional documents amounting to an extra seventy pages.

The overall experience of reading the 1703 large folio edition is thus almost like that of trying to decipher and disentangle the several layers of the cathedral itself. Battely's glosses and corrections are overlaid upon Somner's original compilation of source quotations, archival extracts, and personal observations, while Somner's whole text is then followed by Battely's own additional and revisionary accounts and further documentation.

As we try to match up these various strata of juxtaposed, interleaved, and superimposed information with our own knowledge, direct and indirect, of the cathedral, we can feel that we are not so much trying to choose between different accounts of 'what happened', as in the various versions of Becket's death, or decide which statement is true or false, as between polemically competing interpretations, as with Foxe's arguments.

Rather, it is as if the two authors of the composite volume offer us alternative or even parallel worlds which at times inter-penetrate each other but overall operate together more as a kind of super-positioning, producing an almost quantum-like effect of hovering between complementarity and uncertainty.

Add to this a feature of the entire text which it is difficult to exemplify briefly, which is that since the volume as a whole is organised spatially, as an itinerary through the city, each area or building acts as a kind of separate hook upon which what can seem like a miscellany of historical evidences and local observations can be hung, so that despite the declared 'methodicall proceeding' the overall impression left from reading the volume is certainly not one of any consistent or even coherent chronological narrative but, perhaps appositely as well as frustratingly, of having wandered through the city itself with a well-informed if somewhat garrulous companion. This indeed was to be the model later celebrated in the very title of William Gostling's *A Walk In and About the City Of Canterbury*, a work to be discussed in a different context.

The complete 1703 edition is now difficult to find, except as a digital download. When a facsimile reprint of the *Antiquities* was published in 1977 it consisted of Battely's 1703 revised version of the 1640 text but without his own additional volume and appendix, the *Cantuaria Sacra*. The reprint did however include two further additions made by Battely in 1703 which had not been in the 1640 edition and which extend or modify the points I have been making, each with different implications I will shortly explore.

illustrations

Somner's 1640 book hadn't sold well, and the remaining unsold copies were reissued with a modified title-page in 1661. One reason perhaps why Battely did not simply correct Somner's text but rather awkwardly inserted his own revisions was that the 1703 publication was in part a tribute to Somner himself and an attempt to trade upon his now enhanced reputation, established by the success of the Anglo-Saxon dictionary. Battely provided an additional preface which outlined Somner's life and listed his various works, including his unpublished manuscripts still in the Cathedral archive. To improve further the saleability or at least profitability of the book Battely added a number of engravings about which he writes in the preface:

> Several Sculptures of Monuments, Prospects, and Plans of this Church, are added to this Work. We are obliged of the Honourable Benefaction of some Generous and Worthy Persons (as appears in the Dedication of the several Tables) for the greatest part of them. By this pious Bounty, they have preserved (as far as may be) from the Ruins of Time, and Casualties, as well the stately Fabrick of this Church, as the Ancient Monuments of some Great Persons; and have moreover perpetuated their own Names to all Posterities.
>
> Besides these Tables, which are now presented to the View of the Reader, there are several other Beautiful Prospects and Monuments in this Church, which are not yet done. This is a Deficiency, which I used my utmost Endeavours to have prevented; but could not. I will

> therefore name what things are wanting, as the best means to procure them to be supplied in time: The Inside of the Church, and of the Quire; the West entrance into the Quire; the Chapel of Virgin Mary, on the East-side of the Martyrdom, the North-side of the Church, and the Gate which leads from the City to the Church, would afford stately and fair Prospects . . .

Battely then, optimistically, lists a further score or so of monuments and tombs which 'are mentioned in this Treatise' but not yet illustrated, inviting, in effect, more sponsorship contributions.

Somner's 1640 volume had no illustrations apart from a single map of the city and a drawing of the baptismal font. Dugdale's *Monasticon* and his *History of Saint Pauls* had both been quite heavily illustrated, with some magnificent full-page engravings by Wenceslas Hollar, including one in the *Monasticon* of the 'South Prospect of Canterbury Cathedral' which Battely reproduced in his own 1703 publication. In all, Battely's double volume included a panoramic view of Canterbury as a frontispiece, and in the *Cantuaria Sacra* two diagrams or plans depicting possible reconstructions of the pre-Norman church, a full-page engraving of the West front, and ten plates with depictions of tombs.

As an additional inducement to purchasers, or as a way of soliciting more financial contributions from patrons, each of the tomb engravings normally has simply the name and title of the deceased but that identification is itself upstaged by an elaborately decorative dedication to an individual named patron or subscriber to the volume, often incorporated in an ornate cartouche. As the preface indicates, Battely was apparently unable to recruit sufficient dedicatees to subsidise the number of engravings he had planned and despite these attractions the edition was not commercially successful enough to corner what was a burgeoning market.

Ironically perhaps, my copy of the 1640 volume has been what the book-trade calls 'extra-illustrated' with numerous cuttings from newspapers and various prints and other images pasted into its pages, whereas a previous owner of my 1703 edition has meticulously and usefully added pencil annotations to the documents in both appendices to indicate their original archive locations and catalogue numbers. More layers have almost inevitably accrued, with my own annotations in the faintest possible of pencil markings. Let us patiently excavate further.

Dart

In 1726 a lavishly produced almost elephant folio volume entitled *History and Antiquities of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury* appeared, attributed on the title page to 'the Reverend Mr. J. Dart.' An unsuccessful lawyer and a curate in small villages in Hampshire and Berkshire, John Dart had previously published an edition of a tale mis-attributed to Chaucer, and a verse

translation of the love poems of Tibullus, described in the old *DNB* as 'a truly wretched paraphrase', though the entry adds that his topographical poem *Westminster Abbey* (1721) is 'still worse'. That poem was included in the two-volume *Westmonasterium; or the History and Antiquities of the Abbey Church of St. Peter's, Westminster*, *Printed and sold by James Cole engraver et. al., London* (1723). That work included 129 engraved plates with over 140 images, and seven plates of subscribers' coats of arms, and though there is a full-page portrait of Mr Dart preceding the preface it is fair to say that the project seems to have been mainly James Cole's. Cole had found a winning formula and repeated it in the Canterbury volume, which is nevertheless usually referred to as Dart's.

The Canterbury volume follows quite closely the example of Somner in its overall arrangement, first briefly discussing the foundation of the cathedral and the several accounts of the beginnings of Christianity in England, and then summarising the probable Saxon rebuilding episodes, but this overall history is extremely truncated and within five pages we are already into the twelfth century. He then provides a slightly more detailed account, explicitly dependent upon Eadmer and Gervase, of the 1174 fire, but by page 16 we are already up to Henry VIII and the dissolution. After which there is a brief account of the various altars and chapels, and then the demolished shrines, including a short version of Becket's death with an acknowledgement that the Henrican account was simply a political 'blackening' of Becket's reputation rather than an accurate historical account. There are then a few pages on chantries and a somewhat confusing list of 'anniversaries' once observed in the cathedral liturgy.

At page 26 'A Survey of the Cathedral' begins, a rapid descriptive tour, traversing a now familiar route through the nave to the choir, the Corona, the Treasury, the crypt, the cloisters, Chapter House, and library, with some references to Dart's own appendix of documents. This entire survey takes a mere thirteen pages, but the brief text is wholly overshadowed by a number of impressively detailed engravings: a large-scale pull-out version of the South prospect of the cathedral based, once again, upon Hollar's famous engraving, several large folded plates of the nave, the choir, the shrine area, and full-page views of the crypt and the Lady Chapel.

Then at page 39 there is 'A Survey of the Monuments' including transcriptions and translations of the various memorial inscriptions, with forty or so of these accompanied by folio-sized engravings of specific monuments. As we turn the pages of these two surveys what strikes the eye – particularly since many of them have to be folded out in order to be seen fully – are the elaborate and detailed representations of the various architectural spaces and the individual tombs, clearly inscribed by the designer and engraver of the print itself, normally indicated as 'J. Cole' whom the title-page identifies as also the main publisher of the entire work.

The selling-point, substance, and significance of Dart's publication clearly lies in these illustrations. The sixty or so plates, inserted into a total of only

200 pages (excluding the appendix), provide a largely visual survey of the cathedral as it was in the 1720s, the impact of which is far more than that of the textual content or a matter simply of the relative number of pages. The attitude of the reader changes very considerably from that of reading a 'history', as Dart more fully implements the overall effect which Battely had clearly also been hoping for. The splendid full-page engraved illustrations now become the dominant feature of the book and the primary way in which 'the Cathedral' is presented to us.

double displacement

Dart's volume, or Cole's, makes visible a form of double displacement which I want to probe. The text transcribes the written inscriptions associated with the dead who were intended to be memorialised by the more or less prominent and elaborate physical tombs and plaques devoted to them, but in printing these impressive engravings of the 'monuments' the book presents the monuments themselves as to be appreciated and admired in their own right, with the focus not upon the dead person so commemorated as upon the splendour of their tomb. And further, just as it is in effect no longer the dead who are being commemorated for whatever virtues or achievements might be inscribed on their tomb tablets, it is not even their monuments but the fine work of the artist-engraver whose impressive designs are actually being celebrated.

What is memorable is not the previous life of the particular dead subject but the physical object which ostensibly memorialises him or her, yet that object too has now been further transformed into an image on the page, a two-fold displacement. It's then no surprise that these full-page plates and folded pull-outs have frequently been extracted from the physical volume and sold to be appreciated or displayed as objects in their own right, with little indication of any original context or even location.

The Dart-Cole publication is the precursor of the heavily illustrated guidebook in which a sumptuous coloured photograph of, for example, Chichele's highly photogenic tomb is accompanied by a mere line or two of biographical identification, perhaps only a laconic name and a date. The myriad photographs taken by visitors today of an impressive tomb will rarely be accompanied by any reminder of whose tomb it is, and it is rare to see anybody also taking a photograph of the identifying signage next to a monument. Even Battely's practice of dedicating an individual engraving to a sponsor may be echoed in the act of promptly sending one's instagram photo to a friend, a digital variation on the postcard, both a greeting and a vicarious souvenir. It is not the dead who are being remembered but your own encounter with their memorial which is instantly recorded for possible future remembrance and in celebration of your own fleeting experience.

Somner's 1640 book could be regarded as a kind of useful local guide to the city, and you might possibly have carried that compact quarto volume as

you followed his path around the city and the cathedral, but the sheer size and bulk of both Battely and Dart make it clear that those publications were intended for the library and the drawing-room table and certainly not for carrying round the cathedral. They were a substitute for it. The Dart volume is even more an example of what was to become the 'coffee-table book', designed primarily for display and browsing, with the engravings themselves likely to become sought-after individual objects, as decorative prints framed for display or added to a collection, prints drawer, or portfolio.

The 1726 physical book presents itself as a high-status and expensive object, printed on fine paper with elaborate typography. It opens with an overall dedication, stretching over two pages in very large letters:

> To the most Reverend Father in God, WILLIAM (by Divine Providence) Lord Archbishop of CANTERBURY, Primate and Metropolitan of all ENGLAND, and One of the Lords of His Majesty's Most Honourable Privy Council . . As the Cathedral of *Canterbury*, for its Superiority, Early Establishment, Excellence of Structure, and Sepulture of *Great* and *Excellent Men*, Your GRACE's Predecessors, requires the first Regard of the *Historian's* pen, and the *Insculptor's* Art, so Your GRACE . . justly demands the Tribute of This Performance . . I beg Leave to subscribe myself, with all dutiful Submission, *May it please Your* GRACE ! Your Most Obedient, Humble Servant, James Cole .

The following nine pages are taken up with nearly 400 miniature depictions of the coats-of-arms of noble subscribers to the publication of the book. Dart and Cole were clearly more successful than Battely in richly harvesting subscribers. The presence of those numerous coats of arms can even now add to the aura of a particular kind of aristocratic pedigree which somewhat crassly increases the alleged value of this volume in antiquarian book-dealers' catalogues.

Such book-collecting can itself become a form of double displacement, with the commercial transformation of a text into a desirable object and then into a curious kind of image, so that, for example, an expensively rebound copy of Selden's edition of Eadmer, refurbished to look like a seventeenth-century binding, can increase the price of the volume well out of the reach of anyone, including myself, who actually wants to be able to read it.

The now valuable "collectors' item" may be acquired simply to enhance the impressive appearance of a library populated by similar trophy acquisitions prominently but inertly arranged upon their shelves. That 'uncut' pages can be assiduously advertised as a desirable feature of a 'rare' volume indicates that the text might as well be in Anglo-Saxon as far as a certain kind of collector is concerned. By the early eighteenth century, the

Oxford antiquarian Thomas Hearne had learned that restricting to a mere hundred or so the print-run of his somewhat idiosyncratic publications of mediaeval and later texts catered not so much to the small clientele who might actually have a scholarly use for those texts but rather to those who valued the physical objects for their very scarcity. Hearne acknowledged one tributary to the cult of book-collecting by printing not only the *Collection of Curious Discourses* of the Society of Antiquaries but also putting into print for the first time John Leland's own *Itinerary* and *Collectanea* recording his asymptotic search for monastic manuscripts.

Mediaeval manuscripts themselves can provide another variation on the double displacement of a text into an object into an image. On the one hand, often the text of a mediaeval manuscript has been edited, annotated, collated, and printed, but with the omission, partly because of technical printing limitations, of the specific illuminations and ornamentations found in that manuscript. On the other hand, it is those very 'illustrations' which can be singled out by another kind of interest, and which thereby makes them vulnerable to being cannibalised by dealers in manuscripts: the illuminated initials and in particular any large-scale inserted images not only become the focus of a different kind of scholarly attention, concerning their specific function within a particular manuscript or their relationship to overall artistic developments, but also proclaim their desirability as a collectable item.

It is mildly ironic that there is a two-volume catalogue of manuscripts in the Corpus Parker Library which reproduces only such selected visual material while its own quality as a superbly produced publication makes it an unaffordable collectors' item: *Insular, Anglo-Saxon, and Early Anglo-Norman Manuscript Art at Corpus Christi College, Cambridge: An Illustrated Catalogue* by Mildred Budny, 1997.

To extend these instances more widely, the highly photogenic Westgate at the end of Canterbury High Street is no longer regarded primarily as a protective gate into the city but as both a rather irritating obstruction to local traffic and an unmissable sign proclaiming to tourists the age of the city, a palpable mark of its antiquity. When in the nineteenth century the corresponding gate at the other end of the High Street proved too narrow for the entry of a travelling circus it was allegedly demolished without much regret since the immediate amusement was considered more desirably pressing than any unnecessary reminder to the local population of how old their city was, just as the need to see the cathedral clock was sufficient reason to remove the turrets on Christ Church Gate, only later to be replaced in the mid-1930s when such features could assume the function of proclaiming a very visible kind of artificial or hybrid antiquity. A further variation is that the reconstructed turrets on that gate, or the rebuilt North West Tower of the cathedral, are no longer regarded as architectural fakes but rather as themselves photogenically authentic objects from a now historical period, that of the 1830s or 1930s.

We can glimpse here an application of Walter Benjamin's schema of the sacred object with its cultic aura being first de-sacralised and then commoditised but still with a residual hieratic character. One could argue that this is what has happened to 'the Cathedral' as a whole and not just to the monuments within it. Battely's title 'Cantuaria Sacra' referred mainly to those Canterbury ecclesiastical establishments which, apart from the cathedral itself, were largely no longer regarded as sacred. The ruins of several dissolved monasteries have made the transitions from sacred places to picturesque scenes to tourist destinations and finally to attractive backdrops for selfies. Although monuments to the dead have been endowed with a kind of attributed quasi-sacrality, the image of such a monument is not yet presented as itself having sacred qualities, and one cannot imagine a reader of the printed inscription on a tomb reciting a prayer for the deceased while admiring a print of their monument, any more than a day-tripper to Canterbury might respond devoutly to the images of the Passion instruments on the Christ Church Gate.

virtual

Let us step back. An event is not, after all, a text or an image and neither is a building. Though an object or an image might prompt an event. Having seen Hollar's engraving of the South prospect one might wish to go and see the place itself, and to look at the actual spaces and monuments with a guide book in one's hand. Yet simply being in the place without the events which occurred in that place is hardly to 'enter' into its history. As it happens, one of the first demonstrations of VR or 'virtual reality' was based on a digital 3-D reconstruction of the interior of what Cluny Abbey church was envisaged to have been like in the twelfth century. One could make a virtual visit to inspect the space by remotely accessing the head-set viewpoint of a guide presented as virtually within it, almost as a variation upon the familiar TV mediation of a commentator or reporter standing within the location which figures in the documentary or news item. They are there 'in our place', however unnecessarily, for an 'on the spot' news package.

We have since learned from the extraordinary development of immersive video games that it would now be possible to pay a virtual visit not only to a complex reconstruction of the physical architecture of a cathedral but also to 'witness' a version of past activities and rituals enacted within it, including for example the death of Becket in Canterbury, which has already been extensively filmed and otherwise visually depicted but which could now be made available even for immersive participatory involvement – a technological possibility perhaps not entirely remote from that participatory re-enactment of a past sacrificial event once attributed to the Eucharistic ritual.

Actively 'entering' into a 'virtual reality' version of a historical event is arguably no more or less artificial or necessarily misleading than being immersed in a lively fictional novel or a dramatisation upon a stage. In all these cases what we can encounter is the almost accidental inclusion of definite details which are 'fixed' by the particular process of representation, even if they were ambiguous or obscure in a narrative text which is being realised, as a film may record details of the actual landscape location in which a fictional or even unbelievable event is represented as happening.

In high resolution participatory video combat games the paraphernalia of mediaeval knighthood is frequently deployed, including elaborate identificatory coats of arms, thereby even recovering something of their actual function. The decorative coat of arms and the armour suspended above the Black Prince's tomb might once have signalled his martial prowess and his royal lineage, even if the actual objects were themselves only display versions for use in ceremonial joustings, but the child-sized versions of such armour often on sale in souvenir shops at National Trust properties cater to that curious play-activity of hybrid history events in which imagined warriors enact improvised variations upon 'actual' historical events, incidents, practices, often themselves derived from fictionalised versions of a romanticised period.

One might say much the same of the costumes and accoutrements not just of Civil War enactment societies but of members of the House of Lords, or those High Court judges who still prefer wigs and robes, or British ambassadors who present their diplomatic credentials in costumes which fatuously evoke an imperial past. Those responsible for turning genuine Norman castles into versions of Disney-World fantasy palaces, or eighteenth-century follies which pretended to be castles, continue a process that might be seen to include also such movements as neo-classical architecture or Gothic revivals, the painted representation of eighteenth-century politicians in Roman togas or the statues of Confederate slave-owners as noble heroes.

I am not of course attributing all these familiar developments to the pernicious influence of obscure antiquarians in the seventeenth century but rather illustrating the extent to which Canterbury cathedral and its history has long been both an example of and perhaps a contributory factor to the popularity of such curious processes of "entering into history". A displacement of focus from the textual narrative of historical events to the pictorial illustrations which were intended to accompany such narratives may also include the development of the major genre of 'history painting', indicating a work which is displayed almost to represent the very notion of History rather than necessarily to depict any specific incident, a pictorial equivalent to staging a single scene or tableau extracted from a Shakespeare 'history' play.

To have a 'history painting' on a gallery or domestic wall might be simply to regard it as signifying History but perhaps also because the painting itself

has come to be regarded as having historical significance. The age of a painting contemporary with the incident or portrait it depicts can then itself act as a witness not necessarily to the authenticity of the representation but as testimony to its own antiquity. In a BBC costume drama it may not be possible even to distinguish between moments which ostensibly derive from historical sources and those which are constructions of a fictional version persuasively imagined, as in the television versions of Hilary Mantel's novels about (her highly imaginative interpretation of) Thomas Cromwell. But if we extrapolate these practices a little further we might ask whether 'the Cathedral' is now not so much a physical object as essentially an attractively authentic image of its own antiquity. Perhaps even a persuasive virtual reality of itself. It is time to return to thinking about guide books.

guide books.

Nearly fifty years after the Cole-Dart volume, we can trace further permutations of Somner's 'methodical proceeding' in three different editions of a publication aimed at rather less affluent readerships than either Battely or Dart. In 1772 the Canterbury printer T. Smith and Son published *An Historical Description of the Cathedral and Metropolitan Church of Christ Canterbury containing an account of its antiquities and of its accidents and improvements since the first establishment.* This fairly flimsy hundred-page book was a limited but useful guide mainly to the inscriptions and epitaphs on the monuments and memorial tablets in the Cathedral . The preface states, modestly and accurately:

> The want of a summary description of the Cathedral Church of Canterbury being a general complaint among strangers, who are prompted by curiosity to view this venerable structure, I have endeavoured, in the following sheets, to supply that deficiency, by giving a short account of the origin of this noble piece of Gothic architecture, and of its many accidents and improvements since its first establishment.
>
> I have also given a correct survey of the monuments and most remarkable grave-stones etc with their Latin inscriptions and translations of them: and, in order to prevent mistakes, every inscription is copied *literatim* from the original.
>
> I have likewise added a complete catalogue of all the Archbishops, Deans, and Archdeacons, from their original institution to the present year: the whole concluding with an account of the burning and rebuilding of this Cathedral in the year 1174, translated from the Latin of Gervase, one of the monks, and an eyewitness.

Presumably the publication was targeted both at locals and at visitors who were prepared to consult it inside the Cathedral and therefore needed no

visual illustrations, but it was also co-published by printers in London, Oxford and Cambridge, perhaps with a secondary market in mind of scholars then fashionably interested in epitaphs more generally.

The transcribed inscriptions make up the bulk of the book and in lieu of engravings there is an effort to match typographically the layout of the incised lettering on the actual tombs or tablets, perhaps as an additional aid for those unfamiliar with Latin, while following rather perfunctory walking directions around the cathedral to recognise and read them. There is a very brief history which begins only in 1011 and thereby entirely ignores the Anglo-Saxon period and evades any issues concerning the original foundation of Christianity in England. The catalogues of archbishops etc, are simply lists with names and dates. The translation of Gervase on the 1174 rebuilding is hardly the equivalent of an appendix of archive material though it seems to have been the first time this unique document was made available in English to readers.

The 1772 preface ended with the hopeful remark: 'If this publication should answer the desired intention, of being useful to the public, and entertaining to the reader, I shall think myself sufficiently recompensed for my trouble.' The author is not identified but was almost certainly John Burnby, a Canterbury solicitor whose other publications were mainly volumes of light verses intended to be humorous.

Some ten years later, in 1783, a second edition announced on its title page that there was now the embellishments of an engraved 'South Prospect of the Cathedral', a preface containing 'Observations on the Gothic Architecture', and 'An Elegy written by the Reverend John Duncombe, M.A.'. The preliminary 'Observations' might be read at leisure while sitting in the nave but this edition is substantially longer, mainly because the list of archbishops has become a chronological series of compressed biographies, each short enough however to peruse or consult while standing in front of the relevant monument. The 150-page paper-backed octavo might still be put in one's capacious pocket or elegant hand-bag and brought out when needed. This revamped edition, as 'Printed and Sold by Simmonds and Kirkby' of Canterbury, probably provided better value for the serious visitor. The inscriptions are no longer laid out typographically but positioned as lengthy footnotes with the Latin original and English translation in conveniently parallel columns. Gervase's treatise is still included but the addition of the 'Elegy' introduces a new component to the established contents.

The poem is positioned in the final five pages and essentially consists of a non-chronological array of tableau-like moments in which the speaker of the poem imagines himself as encountering selected personalities and events which are taken to be the high points of the Cathedral's history, imagined almost in a dream-like or ghostly anticipation of a participatory virtual reality. Feel free to sample, or suffer, a few lines:

Within these long drawn aisles, where Cynthia's light
From story'd glass receives a chequered hue,
Scenes long forgotten and involved in night,
With all their busy actors, strike my view …
Oh! could these tombs their captive dead restore,
Were life rekindled in each chief and sage,
Knowledge would issue from the vaulted floor,
Each voice a comment on th'historic page.
Clarence (a) o'erpowered by Scotch and Gallic foes,
New light would throw on *Bauge's* fatal field,
While *Stratford (b)*, *Morton (c), Wotton (d),* would disclose
State-councils long with steady faith conceal'd. ...
Mark well this spot! Triumphant here in death,
Hark! How proud *Becket (l)* every saint invokes!
See! how he falls, and with his latest breath
Insults th'assassins, and defies their strokes!
Till then resistless, thus subdu'd by *Rome*,
In garb a penitent, a beaten slave,
Great *Henry (m),* dreading a severer doom,
Lies weeping, fasting, on the rebel's grave.

Clearly, Simmonds and Kirkby had no budget to include any such imagined 'history paintings' except in mere poetic description, but the bracketed letters at least indicated footnoted cross-references to the incidents as described in the narrative history, so that the poem could act as a pleasant retrospective reminder of what one has read and observed, as one concludes both book and visit. A further innovation was a table of measurements of the cathedral, replacing and expanding a mere sentence or so in the 1772 edition, but there was still no map or plan of the cathedral itself. One 'observation' on Gothic architecture (appropriated from Warburton's notes on Pope) chimes with some more recent reactions we registered earlier:

> Northern people having been accustomed, during the gloom of Paganism, to worship the Deity in groves (a practice common to all nations) when the new religion required covered edifices, they ingeniously projected to make them resemble groves, as nearly as the distance of architecture would permit, at once indulging their old prejudices, and providing for their present convenience, by a cool receptacle, in a sultry climate: and with what skill and success they executed the project, by the assistance of saracen architects, whose exotic style of building very luckily suited the purpose, appears from hence, that no attentive observer ever viewed a regular avenue of well-grown trees, intermixing their branches overhead, but it presently put him in mind of the long vista through a Gothic cathedral; or ever

entered one of the larger and more elegant edifices of this kind but it represented to his imagination an avenue of trees: and this alone is what can be truly called the Gothic style of building.

In 1799 the same local bookseller, now also proprietor of a Kentish newspaper, published a third edition, described in the half-title simply as 'A Companion to the Metropolitical Church of Christ Canterbury' and clearly intended for a somewhat curtailed visit. There are no transcriptions of monuments and the history is even more perfunctory than before, though the contents page is now very clearly laid out to assist finding one's way about both book and cathedral. The 'South Prospect' is now merely a diminished cartouche but the measured dimensions of the cathedral are given more prominence, and in particular Mr Duncombe's *Elegy* is brought forward in the volume to act almost as a hortatory preface to a proper appreciation of the cathedral's spiritual history (though no longer provided with explanatory footnotes). It concludes, execrably:

Thus, musing o'er the past, while many a scene
  Of ancient pomp, long vanish'd, I survey,
RELIGION, seraph-like, with radiant mein,
  Flashed through the roof, and said, or seemed to say:
"What though no pilgrims tread this vaulted floor,
  Nor royal guests our festive banquets grace,
Happy the martyr's relics to adore,
  His mouldering shoe, or more than human face;
Freed from the tortures and the toys of *Rome*,
  Wax, incense, idols, and the painter's Art,
Nor *Jew* nor *Pagan* to the flames we doom,
  Nor court the senses, careless of the heart:
All share the cup of blessing and of praise,
  Truths, gospel-truths, impress each vulgar ear;
No mitred sage Sedition's flag displays,
  For Faith, and Hope, and Charity are here.
And though, extoll'd by lying monks, this shrine
  Its wealth and legendary fame has lost,
Richer in works WAKE, HERRING, SECKER shine,
  And a true martyr we in CRANMER boast.

While today's reader may not be entirely confident who Wake, Herring, or even Secker might be, and might perhaps not wholly endorse the overall sentiments of this edifying versifying in its attempt to conjure up past sacral status, the short introduction to both the 1783 and 1799 editions usefully formulates a central issue we have been circling, while the variations and permutations of components in these guide-books also make the problem

plain: that there is no satisfactory way of orchestrating and compositing these various components into a single overall presentation or account:

> As the Cathedral, of which the following little tract may in great measure be considered only as a general description, is of too large an extent to examine with that attention necessary for the comprehending the various and complicated structures of its several parts, in the short time strangers usually allow themselves, for that purpose; and its being made up, as it were, of so many distinct buildings, each formed agreeable to the taste of the period in which that particular species of architecture prevailed. Persons who have not made antiquities their study, will be at a loss to reconcile their appearance; as the style here used is not strictly conformable to any order, either of the Greek or Roman architecture, though it may be said to partake, in some degree, of them all.

The opening essay on 'Gothic' architecture might ease the particular perplexity here singled out, but the larger issue is not so easily resolved. It is not only the case that the material or physical cathedral is constituted 'of so many distinct buildings' but that what we refer to as 'Canterbury Cathedral' can be taken to comprise several distinct kinds of 'history' or, perhaps more strictly formulated, that understanding what that apparently innocuous phrase refers to requires the contribution, cooperation, convergence, or even reciprocal assimilation, of many apparently distinct disciplines.

Fortunately, perhaps, my own essay is not intended directly as a contribution to any such comprehensive inquiry but rather the reverse: I am trying to use 'the Cathedral' to prompt my own probably idiosyncratic considerations upon some of the disciplines or modes of thought required for any specialist studies, but also to pursue questions, problems, issues, and 'half-thoughts' provoked by a long acquaintance with 'the Cathedral'. In this extended segment, or 'distinct building', I have been circuitously pursuing issues to do with the nature or practice of writing 'history'. Pursuing this overall concern, let me explore a little further the contributions which might be made to these issues by a few more texts which have been devoted to the Cathedral itself.

Between Somner's *Antiquities* and the present there has obviously been a proliferation of books, essays, studies, guidebooks, coffee-table books and so on, devoted to Canterbury Cathedral, including publications consisting entirely of engravings, lithographs, photographs, of the interior and exterior, as well as an almost uncountable number of specialist articles, scholarly studies, biographies of archbishops, popular accounts, and research dissertations. Already in 1836 The *Bibliotheca Cantiana* required fifty pages just to list those studies of the cathedral which had been published prior to its own date of publication. One recalls Somner's rueful remark on

the endlessness of Saint Augustine's archives. There is, however, one 19th-century publication which above all others selects itself for comment.

ROBERT WILLIS

In 1845 Robert Willis published his *The Architectural History of Canterbury Cathedral*. Gervase's tract on the 1174 fire and the rebuilding of the choir, from being a manuscript in Parker's library but unavailable to Somner, then printed by Twysden, referred to by Battely and Dart, and translated into English by Burnby, now became the centrepiece of Willis's work, translated in full and commented upon in very close detail. Willis also compiled and presented as sequentially as he could every pre-Norman written reference to the Cathedral which could be interpreted as casting any light upon its history as a building:

> My plan therefore has been, first to collect all the written evidence, and then by a close comparison of it with the building itself, to make the best identification of one with the other that I have been able. I have also confined myself strictly to the history of the building, without mixing up with it the history of the see, which most writers upon this subject have been tempted to do. Thus the mission of Augustine, vast and important as its consequences were, has for my purpose no other result worth noting than the recovery of the ancient Christian church at Canterbury, the work of the Roman believers, which in the course of ages grew up into the huge fabric of the present cathedral; and the murder of Thomas à Becket only concerns me as the cause of the removal of the pillar and vault which originally occupied the scene of his death, and as the motive which led to the erection of the magnificent eastern termination of the cathedral; and perhaps as the source of the wealth which enabled the monks to re-erect the church on so extensive a plan. On the other hand, various events so trifling, that they would be neglected altogether in a history of the see, require in a history of the building a complete and prominent notice if they even affect the change of position of a door or the reconstruction of a window.

In particular, Willis included several passages from Eadmer's various lives of Saxon Saints from which, not unlike Somner's practice, he extracted almost incidental references to the cathedral as a building and, being after all a Cambridge Professor, he even had access to Parker's library at Corpus Christi to consult a neglected manuscript of Eadmer's minor works. In these respects, Willis was doing more or less the same job as his predecessors but rather more systematically and as a professional academic.

What marks Willis as establishing another variation upon the now established 'methodical proceeding' and the familiar tour, was his provision

of both detailed plans and sections of the building and of its various parts, and his exactly measured or at least proportional drawings of elevations, vaulting shafts, piers, columns, arches, and his meticulous drawn depictions of capitals, base moldings, rib molds, dog-tooth decorative work, and so on. As the Jacksonian Professor of physics, mechanics, and engineering at Cambridge University with a reputation for making accurate demonstration models and for inventing a variety of technical apparatuses, the claim in his preface was entirely credible:

> The sections of moldings which I have given were all, with the exception of a few that were inaccessible, drawn with the cymagraph, and reduced for the engraver by the help of the pantograph and camera lucida, their contours may therefore be depended upon for precision.

John Britton had preceded Willis in printing measured elevations of Canterbury cathedral, in his multi-volume studies of English cathedrals from 1814 onwards, and Willis duly acknowledges Britton's work.

However, Willis also provided a very detailed pull-out double diagram, both plan and matching section, of the cathedral from the east end of the nave to the Corona, drawn to scale and variously cross-hatched to indicate different dates of construction, with overlaid alphabetical and numerical annotations which provided a key allowing cross-references between the diagrams and the detailed exposition of the descriptive text, both Gervase's account and Willis's own commentary upon it.

Whereas the pull-out engravings in Battley or Dart encouraged a browsing appreciation, Willis's various kinds of image demanded and enabled a close attentive examination which can feel for the reader like hard work rather than aesthetic enjoyment. Working out the connections between Gervase's text and the actual construction of a particular component of the cathedral building through the mediation of the detailed diagrams is more like solving a puzzle or following an engineering demonstration than admiring the skill of an artistic engraver.

It's worth remarking that Willis's youthful exposé of von Kempelen's alleged automaton chess-player had been plagiarised by Edgar Allan Poe and the affinity between Willis's procedure and that of the detective story is unmistakable: the details elicited from Gervase or closely observed in the actual masonry are clues in an intricate investigation. The diagrammatic devices Willis deploys could also be suitably included as examples in Edward Tufte's *Envisaging Information*. Willis had even invented a 'tabuloscriptive engine' in 1837 which turned a numerical table into a graph and at one point he elegantly summarises Gervase's lengthy and often difficult-to-follow prose description, of the order in which the rebuilding was completed, by designing a single lucid table of dates, architect, location, numbered pillars, etc., presented almost as a modern spreadsheet (p. 48).

Willis would have recognised a kindred spirit in some monastic predecessors. In Battely's preface to the *Cantuaria Sacra*, after describing how the archive papers which Somner had made use of were 'consumed by an accidental fire and others were torn in pieces and wasted in the time of the great Rebellion and others devoured by age', he noted:

> The Care of the Monks to preserve their Rights and Privileges by recording the same things in several Registers, methodizing them differently, according to the Circumstances of Time, or of Place, or of the Quality of the Donor, or of the particular Use and Purpose of the Donation. Thus the Charters of Kings, the Bulls of Popes, the Concessions of Archbishops, and the Donations of all sorts of Benefactors, are still to be seen upon Record, and some of them in more than one of the remaining Registers, by which means they are still preserved, tho' several Registers are lost.

One can almost see the labels on the backup folders. Both Battely and Willis would surely have appreciated, had they known them, the innovative cross-referencing library catalogues of the Christ Church daughter institution Dover Priory, as appreciatively edited by M. R. James, another deviser of intricate detective stories.

However, Willis's work remains basically a sophisticated guide-book and he refrains even from the more strictly engineering or mechanics aspects of construction which he had analysed in his earlier accounts of Italian architecture. His ODNB entry conjures up a picture of him characteristically conducting an architectural tour of a cathedral, which he regularly delivered as the focal point of the Archaeological Institute's week-long annual excursions:

> Arriving at some English cathedral town, Willis began his examination, scraping at walls and examining traces of earlier construction. Just days later he delivered an oral explanation, speaking from within the edifice itself with the vivacity of a popular lecturer or preacher, and often illustrating his history with dissected models showing the successive stages of construction. Contemporaries likened these re-creations of entire structures of which only material and documentary fragments remained to the performances of comparative anatomist Richard Owen or his mentor, the palaeontologist Georges Cuvier.

Willis's lecture on the 'architectural history' of Canterbury Cathedral had been the main address at the inaugural conference of the British Archaeological Association which took place in Canterbury in September 1844 and, as Willis himself says:

> On the following morning I had the honour of explaining to a numerous audience in the Cathedral itself, the application of this translation [of Gervase] to the building, and also of pointing out those later parts of which the history has been recorded, and which are the subject of the concluding chapters.

The deliberate limitations of Willis's work are made clear in his own remarks:

> The cloisters, chapter-house, and other monastic buildings connected with the cathedral, are of the most interesting character, but their history is so completely distinct, and would have extended this work so much beyond its proper limits, that I have reserved them entirely for the subject of a future essay.

And, again:

> I have also confined myself strictly to the history of the building, without mixing up with it the history of the see, which most writers upon this subject have been tempted to do.

As Somner's schema had indicated, there is a genuine problem in integrating a list of archbishops with the history of the fabric. There is no necessary connection between the two registers and it may be merely the accident of a fire which involves any particular Prior or Archbishop in what turns out to be a major contribution to the fabric of the building. But surely the history of the monastic institution itself is not 'completely distinct' even from the very shape of the building. Willis argues that it was Lanfranc's re-burial of several saintly corpses after the 1067 fire which prompted the expansion of the cathedral to accommodate more shrines, but the function of numerous side-chapels in providing altars for an increasing number of monks to celebrate Mass, as chantry priests or otherwise, would also directly affect the design of the building as a whole. Changes in the liturgical function of the cathedral may not be as directly legible in the present fabric as the structural role of additional buttresses but both are intertwined in any putative 'total 'history – if such is possible or conceivable.

It was not until 1869 that Willis finally published a volume on the monastery of Christ Church, with a twelfth-century map of the water-works providing the armature for his detailed explication, as Gervase's text had done for the 1855 volume. The exposition of the map as a diagram of the relationship between several monastic buildings is again a *tour de force* but it is only incidentally that we are given any sense of the activities of the monks actually occupying and living in those buildings. There is a slightly tart reference to the dormitory windows being 'placed so high above its floor

that no person within it could see what was passing in the court' outside, coupled with a footnoted quotation from Archbishop Winchesley's 1298 statutes to the effect that all doors to the cloisters were to remain closed to 'carefully guard against the entrance of women'. Willis also notes, perhaps with a touch of sarcasm, that the Almonry building, for the relief of the poor, was located 'at the greatest possible distance from the church'. There is a fleeting moment in the 1855 volume (p 108) worth pausing on:

> In Hollar's plan [in the *Monasticon*], proceeding from the western door of the choir eastward, we first arrive at two steps extending between the two principal pillars (VI [in Willis's plan]). The middle stone of the lower step has a semicircular projection, with a square hole in it now filled up. West of these steps, the pavement is of grey marble in small squares, but eastward is of large slabs of a peculiar stone, or veined marble, of a delicate brown colour. . . . The two steps at VI were removed three or four feet to the east of the original position in 1706, but the circular projection seems to have been intended for the reception of a crucifix, or a lectern, and therefore must have been part of the arrangement before the Reformation.

One can almost see Willis pointing out the interestingly different colourings of the stone pavement to his conference audience, but the considerable liturgical difference between placing a 'crucifix' (!) or a lectern (?) at that juncture of choir and presbytery seems to prompt no question at all. The ellipsis in my quotation of this passage raises another issue:

> When parts of this [pavement] are taken up for repair or alteration, it is usual to find lead which has run between the joints of the slabs, and spread on each side below, and which is with great reason supposed to be the effect of the fire of 1174, which melted the lead of the roof, and caused it to run down between the paving stones in this manner. This part of the pavement is consequently the undisturbed pavement of Conrad's choir, and probably the only part left.

Willis adds a footnote:

> Gostling says that when the choir was pewed in 1706 some alterations were made in the pavement, and as much of that lead was picked up by some of the workmen as made two large glue-pots . . . And specimens of the same lead were obligingly placed on the table, by Mr. Austin, at the evening meeting of the Archaeological Association at Canterbury in 1844.

Austin was at that time in charge of the fabric of the cathedral and particularly responsible for replacing damaged or decayed stained glass with

his own (now controversial) reconstructions and designs. The appearance of those lumps of lead was a blunt reminder that so much of the evidence for the history of the fabric of the cathedral remained inaccessible, literally buried beneath the present structures and available for inspection only on infrequent occasions, at the opening of a tomb or the disinterring of a corpse, as had happened during the replacement of the pavement in the nave in 1787.

As a meeting of an 'Archaeological Association' the necessity for digging into the earth itself was duly recognised during the 1844 conference and its proceedings included an organised visit to a manor house some miles outside Canterbury where the private Faussett collection of Romano-British finds could, as an exceptional privilege, be examined. Bryan Faussett (1720-1776) had conducted private archaeological digs on some 700 barrows, mainly in Kent, over nearly twenty years, but the inventory of his work was published only in 1856, as *Inventorium Sepulchrale: an account of some antiquities dug up at Gilton, Kingston, Sibertswold, Barfriston, Beakesbourne, Chartham, and Crundale 1757 to 1773*, as edited by Charles Roach Smith, one of the two founders, with the prolific Thomas Wright, of the British Archaeological Association.

Though Faussett's *Inventorium* has given its name to the on-line *Novum Inventorium Sepulchrale* of ASKED, the Anglo-Saxon Kent Electronic Database, the chequered history of the Faussett collection (now in Liverpool) is an episode illustrating the reluctance of nineteenth-century British Museum authorities and other eminent experts seriously to recognise the importance of the archaeology of Anglo-Saxon England, an establishment attitude not only reflecting a bias towards the classical period but also curiously tied up with the political status of the Norman Conquest, and which was also evident in the hostile treatment of the co-founders of the Archaeological Association and indeed may have contributed to the immediate split after the 1844 conference into the Association and a rival 'Archaeological Institute'. Here I diverge rather too far, even for a garrulous wandering guide, and those stories or histories of divisive English or British archaeology are best pursued elsewhere.

Before we leave the 1844 conference however, the delegates would surely have been aware of a remarkable find made public by Charles Roach Smith only a few months previously. Apparently discovered some years earlier in or near the churchyard of Saint Martins Canterbury was a small hoard of gold coins and jewellery, now datable to about 580 to 590 A.D. It included a small gold medalet with a bust figure wearing a pearl diadem and draped garment. A running inscription reads LEVARDUS EPS, almost certainly referring to Bishop (Episcopus) Liudhard or Luidhard, the Christian chaplain who according to Bede accompanied the Frankish princess Bertha to England upon her marriage to King Ethelbert of Kent, and who worshipped at the church of Saint Martin prior to the arrival of Saint

Augustine in 597. Somner would have been delighted by this exceptional matching of evidences: text, image, physical object.

Chartham News

We can now return to another addition made by Battely in 1703 to Somner's 1640 volume. The contribution of 'archaeology' to any overall conception of what constitutes 'history' was already evident to Somner's generation. Inserted between the *Antiquities* and his own *Cantuaria Sacra*, Nicholas Battely reprinted the text of Somner's *Chartham News* (pp. 186-193), a pamphlet describing the finding of 'strange and monstrous' bones when workmen were digging a well at Chartham, first published in 1669:

> Digging for that purpose about seventeen foot deep, through gravelly and chalky ground, and two foot into the Springs; there met with, took and turned up a parcel of strange and monstrous Bones, some whole, some broken, together with four Teeth, perfect and sound, but in a manner petrified, and turned into Stone; weighing (each Tooth) something above half a pound, and almost as big (some of them) as a Man's fist. Cheek-teeth, or Grinders, as to the form, they are all, not much unlike, but for the bigness, the Grinders of a Man.

Somner first recalls a claim concerning a very large tooth which was attributed to Saint Christopher, and a report of similar teeth found in the Indies, but then suggests that the Chartham teeth were found alongside bones which could not be human bones:

> Some that have seen them . . are of opinion, that they are the bones of the *Hippopotamus* or *Equus Fluvialis*, that is a *River-horse*, for a *Sea-horse*, as commonly understood and exhibited, is a fictitious thing.

He then refers the reader to a drawing included in the pamphlet:

> For more publick satisfaction, and to facilitate the discovery, at least, to help such who are minded to employ their skill in guessing and judging of the Creature, whose remains these are, what it was for kind, we have by, and with the help of an able Limner, adventured on a Scheme or Figure, of several of the Teeth and Bones with their respective dimensions of breadth, length, and thickness.

Somner goes on to speculate how the creature, whether sea or land based, could be found 'at so remote a distance from the sea' and 'at so deep a burial' and whether the sea might once have reached this far inland but then

receded, and whether the level of the land might once have been much lower, as indeed he argues was the case for much of Canterbury:

> It is very certain, and by digging Wells, Vaults, and Cellars and the like, daily experimented, that the most part of the City, not excepting the very Heart and Centre of it, is made and raised Ground; the tokens of Foundations upon Foundations, to a very considerable depth, daily appearing, and the ground (as at *Amsterdam, Venice*, and elsewhere) for supporting Superstructures, in several places often stuck and stuff'd with Piles of Wood, or long Poles and Stakes forced into the ground, as Wells and Cellar -diggers have informed me. . . .
>
> To this let me add, that my very next Neighbour in *Castle-street,* within these thirty Years, sinking a Cellar, did a good depth (*five or six foot deep*) light upon, and was put to some stop and stand in his work, by a strong and well couched arched piece of *Roman* Tile or Brick, which he was fain to take, or break, asunder, and remove, before he could proceed. Hereof I was an Eye-witness, and (for curiosity sake) took one of the Bricks or Tiles to my self, which, with some other like *Roman* remains (some found in that which is my own garden) I keep by me to this day.

Finding a Romano-British vestige might confirm or be confirmed by a known classical text, but what *Chartham News* obviously highlights is that the finding and explanation of an object which has no clear association with a text posed problems to antiquarians primarily familiar with written sources. The teeth and bones which Somner attempts to describe were perhaps objects which preceded any written texts at all, being possibly remains of a prehistoric and even extinct species. Secondly, the only recourse available for making clear to readers their unusual or even unprecedented character was to reproduce a hand-drawn image since no written description by Somner himself could provide a satisfactory account.

Nicholas Battely may have had a particular interest in rather arbitrarily including *Chartham News* in the 1703 publication, since his brother John, who was Archdeacon of Canterbury until his death in 1708, was an avid collector of Roman coins and pottery, acquired particularly at Richborough and Reculver, the Saxon Shore forts. John Battely's *Antiquitates Rutupinae* (Antiquities of Richborough) was composed, like Twyne's *De rebus Albionicis*, in the form of a discussion, between himself and two other chaplains in Archbishop Sancroft's service, Henry Maurice and Henry Wharton, the editor of the *Anglia Sacra* compilation of mediaeval historians.

The Richborough volume was published only posthumously in 1711, republished in 1745 together with his *Antiquitates sancti edmundi burgi* (Antiquities of St. Edmundsbury), and eventually in an abridged English translation in 1774 by John Duncombe, the author of the poetic *Elegy* in Burnby's guidebooks, who had also collaborated with Nicholas Battely in

producing a study of the three 'Episcopal Hospitals' in Canterbury – an instance of the local Canterbury network, to which one could add another Battely brother, Charles, who was Keeper of the Records of the Augmentation Court, which had once been responsible for overseeing financial aspects of the monastic dissolutions.

The preface to Duncombe's translation of the *Antiquitates Rutupinae* says of John Battely:

> To these researches he was prompted by the very situation of the place where he lived; as coins, fibulae, rings, keys, urns, and other Roman antiquities were daily found in his neighbourhood, and continually brought to him. Of these he made a large collection…

The volume includes an account of John Battely's own instructions for deliberate attempts at proto-archaeological digging (p. 134):

> I shall now briefly relate the particular method pursued by me in collecting antiquities at Reculver, and the plan which I would recommend to all collectors in general. I visited Reculver on account of its great reputation for antiquity: I applied myself to such of the inhabitants as employed themselves in searching for ancient remains; I gave them a strict caution not to clean such coins as were rusty, by rubbing them with sand or anything else; as I have seen many of the most valuable by that means quite obliterated; to sell no brass to the brasier's, but to reserve it for me, and I would give a higher price for it; to break no urns or pots; and if they found them broken, and inscribed with any marks or letters, to bring into me. This was the origin of my collection.
>
> In other places, let him who is curious in such researchers, open barrows; let him explore encampments, trenches, and the places adjoining; let him examine the ancient public ways; let him, without superstition or dread, open and ransack sepulchres, which are generally by the road-side; let him carefully explore the ruins of cliffs; when he finds any traces of antiquity, let him pursue them, and call in the assistance of connoisseurs; if he should discover any coins, either lying in a heap, or enclosed in an urn or pot, let him observe the latest; for they will nearly determine the time when they were buried; let him allow every man of learning full liberty to inspect whatever he finds: when he meets with inscriptions, let them be accurately copied, and, without envy, communicated to the world. And be these the laws of antiquaries.

These quasi-archaeological digs, deliberate or serendipitous, also raised the practical issues of where, and to what extent and depth, such digs might be undertaken. A barrow visible in the landscape was almost an open

invitation to Bryan Faussett but why not probe beneath every house in Canterbury, and how far down should one dig anyway ? When did history begin?

For investigations in which direct support for the interpretation of a found object could not be derived from any related text, or an historical event validated by a physical discovery, some interpretative support might be provided by direct observation of terrain, geography and geology. For example, Somner's *Roman Forts and Ports* discusses ground lines visible only during the summer (p. 6f):

> Some will tell you (what others take up more upon fancy and fabulous traditions than good authority) that *Richborough* was a City, the streets whereof (say they) are as yet visible and traceable, at least in the spring and summer time, by the thinness of the corn on those dry and barren tracts and places of the ancient streets, which they call *St Augustin's Cross*. But would you truly be informed of the cause of that? Why then know, that there was sometime indeed a Cross there; a parcel, I mean, of the Castle ground, about the middle or center of it layd out cross-wise, and set apart for the building of a Church or Chappel there: and such a structure at that place really there was, and it was called *Richborough Church* or *Chappel*. .... The rubbish whereof, occasioned either by the demolition or decay of the building, has rendered the soil whereon it stood of that more barren and less fruitful nature and quality, than the adjacent parts.

Elsewhere, discussing the name of the Goodwin Sands, he speculates:

> But when I consider the condition, nature, and quality of the place in hand; the soil or rather the sand, which is both *lentum & tenax,* soft and pliant, and yet tenacious, and retentive withall; I am almost persuaded it might take the name from the British *Gwydn* so signifying, which in tract of time much the easier, and rather corrupted into *Goodwyn*, because of a Kentish Earl of that name a little before the *Norman*-Conquest.

Somner's own interests extended beyond what we would now think of as the disciplines of history and archaeology. In his *A Treatise of Gavelkind*, completed by 1647 but not published until 1660, Somner tried to investigate and explain a local 'antiquity' of another kind, the peculiarly Kentish custom or practice whereby family inheritance was evenly divided rather than accruing to the firstborn. The treatise combines legal, historical, economic, and almost anthropological elements in a multifaceted inquiry which he entitled *A Treatise of Gavelkind Both Name and Thing, shewing the True Etymology and Derivation of the One, the Nature, Antiquity and Original of the Other*, a title recalling his preoccupations as compiler of the *glossarium* and the

dictionarium. Again, he included an appendix of original documents, both Latin and Saxon, and he presents the Saxon texts interleaved line by line with English versions rather than Latin. This too was republished in 1726 by which time the writings and particularly any surviving manuscripts of the antiquarian scholars active in the period from Parker to Somner were being treated almost as themselves archaeological objects to be unearthed, edited, and commented upon as findings from a now remote period.

WILLIAM URRY

William Somner's mid-20th-century successor (that problematic word) as cathedral and city Archivist was William Urry, who provided the account of Somner in the 1977 reprint of Battely's 1703 edition of the *Antiquities*. He wrote monographs on Becket and Marlowe, published essays on the Normans in Canterbury, and compiled a comprehensive list of Canterbury city office-holders. Standard academic works in many respects. But his major achievement *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings* (1967) was in a category of its own.

It opens with an echo, in a more modern idiom, of Burnby's 1783 comment quoted earlier:

> It is three and a quarter centuries since William Somner published his *Antiquities of Canterbury*, the most scholarly among early printed accounts of an English provincial borough. With this admirable lead it might well have been expected that a full-length definitive History of the city would long since have seen the light. This has not been the case though great numbers of books and articles have appeared on individual subjects. A major difficulty is the versatility required of any writer, owing to the intrusion of Canterbury into so many different fields of study. A specialist knowledge of ecclesiastical history, urban history, monasticism (in itself embracing a wide range of different studies), of art and of architecture, is demanded of the local historian. Again, there is the daunting bulk of material surviving from the Middle Ages, and from later centuries. Two vast Benedictine abbeys, a priory, a nunnery, three friaries, five very ancient almshouses, and a score of parish churches, not to mention one of the greater medieval boroughs, can produce between them an embarrassing amount of records, and, independently of any materials at or emanating from Canterbury, a large History could be constructed from information relating to the city's past to be found in the central archives at the Public Record Office. Perhaps one day someone will attempt a synthesis of the various individual studies which have been made; but it is to the latter category that the present book belongs – a contribution towards a future History of Canterbury.

As I have indicated, this essay is not intended as a contribution to any such future history but rather the reverse: to use the cathedral as a prompt for considering, for example, in this segment issues to do with very notion of 'history'. Urry's outstanding volume added a significant further component to the received practices of how to write about the city and cathedral and in effect implemented a new relationship between archive and image, a further 'methodical proceeding' seeking to combine place, text, time, and to integrate the disciplines of archaeology, history, and anthropology.

In *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings* Urry prints *in extenso* (pp. 221 to 385), as previous antiquarians and professional historians might have done, several monastery rental rolls dating from the 1160s to c.1206 which survive in the archives as the raw material for his study, but his interest in them is not primarily to compose an economic or even a civic history – though he does both – but rather to reconstruct the physical and in effect the social character of the city at the time of those rental records.

He does this in the form of two sets of detailed maps, twenty-one in total, half of the city around 1166 A.D. and half about 1200 A.D. They show the individual household locations within the city with the names of individuals from the rental rolls inscribed into each appropriate location boundary, so that we can see in extraordinary detail who lived in particular addresses, together with the physical configuration of the houses and other buildings so occupied.

Those maps could be precisely overlaid upon the contemporary topography of Canterbury at the time Urry was writing, with the partial exception of an area immediately south of the cathedral which had been destroyed by the wartime bombing raid of 1943. Urry was able to draw (almost literally) upon the ongoing and sometimes unpublished archaeological investigations of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust (CAT) which was excavating several areas of the city, including the devastated territory around the Burgate, as eventually published in several volumes of reports such as *Excavations in the Saint George's Street and Burgate Street Areas* (1983).

Urry's maps may look at first like standard archaeological drawings but the insertion of so many individual names across almost the entire central area of the city has a transformative effect, comparable in impact to the inclusion of engraved plates into a narrative history or measured drawings accompanying Gervase's mediaeval narrative.

Paul Bennett, later a Director of the Canterbury Archaeological Trust, has recalled walking round the central area with Urry and finding himself treated to a guided tour not only of partly obliterated and replaced buildings but of the very inhabitants who had once occupied them. It was, said Bennett, as if Urry was introducing his twelfth-century neighbours to a newcomer. One recalls Kennett's remark that Somner's 'visits within the

City were to find out the Ancestors, rather than the present inhabitants; and to know the genealogy of houses, and walls, and dust.'

As with my earlier treatment of Somner, let me select just a few passages, though reluctantly omitting Urry's numerous supporting footnotes. While the maps inscribe only the names, Urry's detailed treatment of the rental rolls supplies considerable information about numerous individual inhabitants, drawn from an impressive array of sources and observations. For example (p. 53):

> Holding at the corner of St Margaret's Street about 1166 (according to Rental B), may be found the 'daughter of Godefrid of MaIling'. She can claim descent from a Domesday knight. Her father must be the Godefrid who came to terms with the monks of Christ Church on Easter Monday 1155 in the *camera* of archbishop Theobald, and in his presence, in connection with the manors of Patching and Wootton (Sussex). Domesday Monachorum affirms that Godefrid dapifer holds a 'sulung' from the archbishop at Thanington (on the river, just above Canterbury). He can hardly be other than the Godefrid of Thanington who attests Charter II, almost contemporary with Domesday. Godefrid dapifer holds elsewhere in Kent, as at Swarling near Canterbury. The Exchequer version of Domesday says that Godefrid holds at 'Lerham' (Lenham) while Domesday Monachorum says that the tenant is Godefrid of MaIling.

And so on for another page or so of detailed family tracing. Another example (p. 174):

> An account of the family of Terric the goldsmith offers an interesting picture of a citizen household of the more prosperous class. Terric is first traced in a rental of about 1180, and is certainly one of the great men of the city in the last years of the century. He employs journeymen, is farmer of the royal exchange, and acts as agent for king John in making purchases, while the ramifications of his business on behalf of the crown reach to the uttermost parts of the realm. As becomes a leading citizen, Terric acts as borough reeve, his colleague in office being Eudo son of Sygar. By 1200 he has a big stone house (where he dwells) in Burgate Street, quite close to the cathedral gate. Before long he takes over the holding of Ralph, nephew of St Thomas, on the river Stour, and there builds another stone house. His death may have taken place by 1208, when a special section appears in the Pipe Roll, headed 'Account of Terric of Canterbury'. The cathedral obituary discloses that he died on 2 June, and it is highly probable that this was in 1208. The entry in the obituary shows that he was a spiritual brother of the monks, and moreover one of their benefactors. For the sake of his soul and that of his wife Matilda, William their son gave to

> Christ Church 15s. rent arising from two stone shops standing opposite St Mary Magdalen church in Burgate. Terric had three sons, William, Philip and John. . . .

The family tree continues for another generation or so, with William becoming a monk in the cathedral and John appointed seneschal of St Augustine's abbey.

As Urry claims and demonstrates: 'It would be possible to construct a family tree for a great many citizens in the twelfth and thirteenth centuries. The ancestry of some of them can be carried back a long way'. Some could be unexpectedly illuminated from sources way beyond those of Urry's own local archives (p. 174):

> Mainer, scribe of the splendid Bible in the library of Ste-Genevieve in Paris, appends a colophon to his work in which he calls himself 'scriptor Cantuariensis' and goes on to say that his grandfather and grandmother were named Ulger and Elvera, that his father was named Wimund, and his mother Liveva, and that she lived happily for eighty years and more. He had one brother named Ralph, with others called Robert and Girold, a couple of wastrels, classed as 'spoliator et praedo' respectively, and another brother called John, with a sister Dionisia. It is satisfying to observe in Rental B a certain widow, holding ground in Burgate ward in Canterbury, named Liveva, whose husband was called Wimund (a mercer).

As with Somner, close and long acquaintance with the local records enabled Urry to connect almost incidental details linking individuals across time and place. At times it can even seem the kind of personal recognition which characterised Stone's familiarity with his monastic brothers. But Urry is not providing a roll-call of the dead, or unearthing a cemetery of mausoleums, but above all summoning up a living city of shops, houses, work-shops, streets, lanes, and back alleys. He is re-peopling the city.

The 1174 fire is again illuminated from a new angle (p. 57):

> The monks of Christ Church, Canterbury, were anxious to get possession of the Cornhills' ground in Burgate Street as it lay uncomfortably near the cathedral, and the buildings thereon were a source of danger from fire. In (probably) 1177 an exchange was made for other territory in Friday Street, London, with the approval of Henry II.

Now this familiar event can be specifically linked to an individual who leased some of the property in question (p. 115):

> It is not improbable that Lambin Frese the moneyer may have played a part, all unintentionally, in an episode famous in architectural history.

> Originally he had a workshop (*fabrica*) in the alleyway in front of Christ Church Gate. About 1177 he moved to a new site in Stour Street, far away from the cathedral. The monks seemed singularly anxious to get rid of him, for they bestowed on him ample ground, far more commodious than the cramped patch he occupied before the gate, gave him a present of ten marks, and went to the length of securing a charter from Henry II himself, confirming the arrangements.
>
> The chronicler Gervase in his 'Burning and Repair of Christ Church, Canterbury', says that the house-fire of September 1174 started among 'domunculae' before the cathedral gate, and that three of these structures were destroyed before the fire was put out. All unseen, sparks or embers, blown up into the roof of the cathedral choir by a south-west wind, had started a conflagration which very soon blazed up, resulting in the destruction of the splendid choir consecrated forty-four years before. The story of its rebuilding is an outstanding document in the history of medieval architecture, while the building itself is one of the most important transitional works in Europe. Since the monks took such elaborate measures to rid themselves of Lambin Frese and his workshop, and since the fire started at the most a few yards therefrom, it is indeed tempting to ask whether or not sparks from his furnace set fire to the workshop and hence to the cathedral.

Lambin Frese the moneyer has already been situated within a wider context, that of the Canterbury mint, authorised to produce legitimate metal currency (p. 113):

> The figures for surviving coinage speak volumes, and show that the manufacture of money must have been a characteristic outstanding industry of the city in the twelfth and earlier thirteenth centuries. A large proportion of the enormous Tealby hoard (5700 silver pennies, found in 1807) was struck in Canterbury. Of the Eccles find (mainly of the short-cross type, running down till c. 1228), comprising 5715 pence, 2643 came from London, and 2278 from Canterbury. The still more bulky Colchester hoard (buried about 1230) contained (among 11,000 coins) some 5000 London specimens against 4122 from Canterbury.

Urry characteristically switches focus, zooming in (p. 114):

> Moneyers responsible for producing this mass of coinage can be found in the documents. Gregory the moneyer is named in a charter of the time of abbot Hugh II of St Augustine's (1128-51). Robert the moneyer occurs about the middle of the twelfth century, and about the same date we find Freawin the moneyer with ground near Newingate. Solomon and Luke, moneyers, have ground near St Helen's church at the end of the century. The individuals actually described in the rentals

> and charters as 'monetarii' are not many, but we may learn from other sources that citizens not so specified are carrying on the industry. Lambin Frese, builder and occupant of the great stone house in Stour Street, is shown by the Pipe Roll to have been a moneyer. The coins themselves offer identifications. Ulard, signing coins in the reigns of Richard and John, may be the Wilard mercator in Hawks' Lane. Meinir, whose name is found on coins of the same age can hardly be other than Mainer 'the rich' with a dwelling a little way off in Stour Street, where the almshouse (Maynard"s Hospital) which he founded is still to be seen. His son Wiulph 'the rich' (not named as a moneyer in the documents) has a great stone house on the corner of the street called 'The Mint' (now White Horse Lane), and can with little doubt be identified with Wiulph signing coins of the Henrician 'Tealby' type.

Individuals whom we have already encountered reappear in a different guise (p. 152):

> Gervase the monk, so it may be learned both from Rentals B and D, brought with him as patrimony when he joined the brethren at Christ Church, two *mansure* in 'Baggeberi', in the northern suburbs of Canterbury. As no differentiation is supplied, we may assume that there was only one monk of the name in the cloister at the period. In such case we evidently have here the historian, Gervase of Canterbury, who gives information about his career which does not conflict in any way with this proposed identification.

Such detailed accounts of individual inhabitants and citizens might possibly be emulated in a similar study of official records and archives in other English cities although, as with Willis, Urry's exceptional attention to detail would be hard to match. But what may be unique is that the combination of detailed mini-biographies and family histories with the innovative topographical maps of the streets and houses of Canterbury, offering no longer a schematic birds-eye view, still less simply a picturesque sample of photogenic ancient buildings, produced a densely detailed ground-plan which aligns the Canterbury of 1166 and 1200 with the city of 'today' (p. 185):

> The most striking fact which may be learned from the Surveys (Rentals Band D) is that within the walls the modern ground-plan can be carried back into the twelfth century. A few modest alleys have disappeared and a new street (Guildhall Street) cut, but otherwise within the walls the layout is much the same as in the reign of king John. Indeed Rental B (as far as it goes) shows that in some of the central areas the layout was just the same thirty or forty years earlier.

And (p. 191):

> A remarkable fact emerging from the study of the rentals is that not only has the general twelfth-century plan of Canterbury survived largely unaltered to this day, but in many instances the ground-plot occupied by a citizen of 750 years ago has also survived, sometimes in depth and sometimes in length, and occasionally in both. This is less surprising than may appear at first sight for private owners are tenacious of their rights and returned to claim their ground after devastations by fire or water. Indeed, as has been suggested, rentals B and D may well be surveys carried out after the fires of 1161 and 1198 to mark out the rights of Christ Church and its tenants.

Such is the persistence across the centuries that anyone seeking to buy a house in the central area of Canterbury today is well advised to consult Urry's maps:

> At the sale a few years ago of property north of St Peter's church, Canterbury, it was discovered that the vendors had no documentary title to a strip of ground about six feet wide running up the middle of the garden. It was quite easy to account for this lack of title for the strip of ground was none other than the old 'eastern lane' described on this axis in Rental D at the end of the twelfth century. (p. 191)

Crucially, of course, it is the longevity of the Cathedral records which enables this detailed topographical demonstration of the close interdependence of monastery and city, the interaction between ecclesiastical ownership and the secular lease of property. A twelfth-century monastic plan, the waterworks diagram which had also been the basis for Willis's 1869 volume on the monastery, is now used for a different purpose (p. 204):

> Fortunate is the student of twelfth-century documents who has a contemporary map to guide him. Much of Rentals A and B would hardly be intelligible without the Christ Church waterworks plan bound into the Canterbury Psalter, with which it is possible to interpret what otherwise would be some very difficult passages. The plan shows the location of features in the Precincts which are near enough to the boundary wall to serve as landmarks to the surveyors setting out housing just outside. Rental A mentions dwelling-places 'behind the brewhouse' or 'behind the bakehouse' The plan indicates that the 'bracinum' and 'pistrinum' stood (and indeed in substance still stand) just within the boundary wall, which ran some way within the northern city wall. On the south side of the Precincts, just within the wall, stood (neatly depicted in the plan) the detached 'campanile, clocarium',

> mentioned in Rental B. The mound on which this stood still survives south of St Anselm's chapel. This belltower finds a mention in contemporary literature, for it was here, at Pentecost, 1169, according to William of Canterbury, that Master Feramin's mystic vision was enacted, when a Voice came from Heaven and the future glory of St Thomas was manifested. The rentals and charters confirm in a remarkable manner the accuracy of minor features in the map and promote confidence in its general fidelity to fact.

And to return to where this essay began, the sixteenth-century Christ Church Gate replaced the previous entry-way into the precincts, which Urry describes on the basis of his knowledge of the surrounding buildings (p. 204):

> The approach to the mother church of England was most unimpressive, for the constant stream of visiting magnates and pontiffs had to pick its way under an outer arch through a winding and apparently narrow alley past congested dwellings, a well called Sunwin's well, Sunwin the smith's forge, round a bend, along the face of the wall, and so into the graveyard. In. this alley started the fire in which three 'domunculae' were half-burned down, sparks from which set fire to the cathedral choir in 1174.

The overall magnificent effect of Urry's *Canterbury under the Angevin Kings* is that the volume is not celebrating the cathedral as the House of God, or the Throne (cathedra) of Archbishops, or the ruling Angevin Kings, or even the landlord monks in their monastery, or digging up a cemetery of the dead. Urry is recording and locating the ordinary people who lived in these everyday houses, worked in local shops, walked familiar streets, and presumably sat on perfectly ordinary chairs, not on a cathedra. A later study, indirectly indebted to Urry, would further explore the material inventory of such ordinary households.

Yet the Cathedral constantly looms over the city. Robert Willis had remarked on the almost incidental significance of the murder of Becket for his architectural inquiry:

> . . the murder of Thomas à Becket only concerns me as the cause of the removal of the pillar and vault which originally occupied the scene of his death, . . and perhaps as the source of the wealth which enabled the monks to re-erect the church on so extensive a plan.

This can be juxtaposed with a compressed passage from Urry (p. 36):

> When at the end of the twelfth century figures for annual receipts from rents first become available we find that income from housing in

Canterbury falls into two groups: *gablum,* from property held at gavelkind, and rents *de domibus et scoppis*. The former represents income from retained rents where property (ground, rather than ground with buildings) is sold in return for a substantial *gersuma,* together with an annual rent, while the latter group represents income from another class of property (houses and shops, as its name suggests) let (locata). Already in the financial year 1198-9 receipts from 'houses and shops' amount to £24 11s. 9¾d. as compared with £31 10s. 7½d. from gavelkind rents. While the gavelkind rents remain almost static or even fall during the thirteenth century there is a remarkable increase in income *de domibus et scoppis*. By 1223-4 takings have reached over £60 from this source and in the thirties figures of over £70 are common. In the year 1281-2 more than £101 is collected, while by 1300 more than £110 is received (in which year £26 11s. l¼d. is received from gavelkind rents). By this date the total income taken by the treasurers in cash is over £2,000 per annum. If the urban rents are but a small proportion of the total income it must be pointed out that they will bear comparison with receipts from what is popularly regarded as a chief source of revenue to the monks of Christ Church.

Much has been said of the 'vast profits' derived from offerings at the shrine of St Thomas, yet in many years within the thirteenth century this income was no greater than that secured from the local rents, and in many years Canterbury tenants actually paid more than the pilgrims offered. In 1220 offerings to St Thomas amount to £383 5s. or nearly five times receipts from rents, but this was the year of the splendid translation when the saint's bones were removed to the new shrine, in the presence of great men from all over Europe, from whom large gifts might be expected. However in 1270, the second Jubilee year, offerings by pilgrims amount only to £204 2s. 10d., not even twice the sum taken from Canterbury rents at the same time. Figures for takings at the shrine such as £109 (1250), £72 14s. l0d. (1258), £95 11S. 3d. (1264) are often exceeded in the rentrolls, as by £116 6s. 1d. (1235-6), £112 1s. 11½d. (1237-8), and £123 8s. ¾d. (1255-6).

Any 'future History of Canterbury' or of 'the Cathedral' would have to reconcile or composite these several angles of attention, not least the architectural and the economic. A further question, perhaps, for when we consider the Treasury.

CAT

Eventually, the cathedral became itself the subject of various archaeological investigations. A report by the Canterbury Archaeological Trust of an excavation in 1993 was published in 1997 as *Canterbury Cathedral Nave: archaeology history and architecture.* It had 17 authors and contributors, 93 plates and 89 figures, with numerous scale-drawings, many of them folding

or pull-out, 12 tables, and 9 pages of bibliography. Any modern archaeological excavation is characterised by the teamwork of multiple specialists, by hard physical labour, and to some extent involves dependence upon technological apparatus, no longer the work of a solo scholar, though all academic disciplines have increasingly involved teamwork cooperation and dependence upon technologies, from basic word-processing to complex data-storage.

In this case the entire pavement of the nave area was taken up and replaced, for the first time since 1787. The report volume comprises a section summarising the overall excavation and its findings, divided into a total of eight unearthed periods, a sequence of photographic plates, another section discussing the main conclusions of the excavation in relation to several specialist contributions, for example summarising the textual evidence from mediaeval historians and later authors such as Somner, with essays on the liturgical functions of the nave from 1077 to 1540, on the use of the nave and repairs to the fabric from 1542 and 1993, and finally a section detailing the minor finds and objects unearthed, amounting to some 538 items.

The report and the dig itself were in many respects standard examples of contemporary archaeological work. The cathedral was procedurally treated much as any secular building, effectively as a de-sacralised object, including the always problematic issue of how to deal with any corpses one might find. The basic decision was taken to restrict the depth of the 1993 excavation to that of the earlier installations of under-floor electrical conduits and gas pipes, but once the paving stones were lifted it became clear that in the re-paving of 1787 many of the graves which were then uncovered had had their contents removed and the resulting pits had been back-filled, which meant that the new excavation could now remove the back-fill in those places and establish the stratigraphy as deep as the filled-in grave pits allowed. It was also concluded that many of the coffins and graves had been previously opened and ransacked, most probably during the 1650s when the Cathedral had been abolished as an institution and the building itself was offered for sale (see p. 153).

However, unlike many archaeological sites this building had associated with it a wealth of documentary material, and among the conclusions in the report are some which at least undermine some of the written sources. For example:

> No evidence was recovered of a processional way in the layout of the floor slabs, though this is said to have been cut into the floor by prior Chillenden (Gostling 1825, 221-2; Vallance 1947, 16). Large quantities of Lanfranc floor slabs were recovered from the backfill of the eighteenth century clearance pits, but none showed signs of engraved lines. (p. 25).

In other cases the archaeological evidence provided no positive support for familiar historical accounts:

> The Anglo-Saxon cathedral was destroyed by fire in 1067. No evidence for this catastrophe was located in the excavations, perhaps because of the thorough dismantling of the building and removal of debris before the construction of Archbishop Lanfranc's cathedral. (p. 22)

> Nearly all of the Anglo-Saxon walls had been reduced to the top of the foundations, thereby destroying evidence of any subsequent rebuilding. (p. 18)

In particular, one of the standard tropes of the historical narrative concerning the origin of the cathedral was at least problematised:

> It should be noted that no continuity between the Romano-British occupation and the first church was found in the excavated area. A layer of destruction rubble and 'dark earth' overlay the Roman remains and was cut by the first church. Bede tells us that Ethelbert gave Augustine two Roman churches, one as the Cathedral, the other the church of Saint Martin a little east of the city. . . The latter is thought to have a Roman element. . . No such claim, however, can be justified from the excavated remains below the nave and south-west transept of the cathedral. If such a structure existed, then it must lie to the east of the nave, as for example at Saint Martin's. . . At Canterbury a possible third-century Roman temple lay beneath St Gabriel's Chapel, around 70 m. to the east of the Roman street located in the nave . . but this lay on the Roman alignment. None of the Roman structures located in the area can be considered as candidates for a Roman Christian church. It has been established that the Romano-British street and adjacent structures lay at a marked angle to the cathedral, and it would have been very difficult to adapt a structure on the old Roman alignment to fit with one on the new Anglo-Saxon alignment. (p. 99, omitting references)

The report offers a further argument not based solely upon the archaeological excavation itself:

> Indeed, if a serviceable, or repairable, church had survived in the city, Queen Bertha would not have walked out of the city to Saint Martin's for worship . . In either scenario discussed above (the re-use of part of, or addition to, an existing building, or the recovery of its site) there is little reason to doubt that the first phase church located in the excavations is that built by Augustine. Given that the various cathedrals (four Anglo-Saxon phases including a major rebuilding, and two later

> re-builds) have all been on the same site, it is unlikely that Augustine's cathedral lies elsewhere. . . Indeed, there would be a major problem of interpretation if the first phase church located by the excavations was not that of Augustine. Augustine's church would surely have survived through the seventh century . . And any new church built in the later seventh or early eighth century (before 731) would surely have been known by Bede. (p. 100)

The excavation included the south-west transept and therefore abutted onto the central Bell Harry tower, concerning which the report comments:

> The above-ground archaeology of the crossing area of the cathedral is the most complicated of the whole building, and there is, in this area, a complex sequence of both horizontal and vertical stratigraphy covering the whole of the cathedral's architectural history from 1071 to c. 1503. (p. 138)

After Willis's account was published in 1855 it was criticised by Charles Sandys on the basis that the written sources indicate that the crossing area was always situated in the centre of the entire edifice and that therefore Willis's speculation that Lanfranc's choir extended only two bays beyond the central tower was incorrect, given also that Lanfranc himself was reportedly buried in an area of the presbytery which according to Willis did not exist until later. The 1997 Report's comment reminds us that several questions remain unresolved and perhaps irresolvable since the eastern half of the whole building now rests upon the crypt rather than directly upon a ground foundation which could have been archaeologically investigated, which is now impossible however sophisticated the technical equipment available.

The basic procedure of any archaeological dig is to uncover layer after layer of the site investigated, meticulously recording the stratigraphy and the relation to that sequencing of any evidence or objects found. The 1997 report uses the abbreviation 'O.D.' (Ordnance Datum) to designate the point of reference from which all depth and height measurements for that particular excavation or dig can be taken and recorded. As Gervase knew in relation to the notion of the year 0 A.D., the selection of an Ordnance Datum might be regarded as inevitably problematic though procedurally necessary, since obviously neither the everyday level of the ground or the bedrock of the planet itself can act as a practical reference point. For example, the O. D. for the British Ordnance Survey's own maps prior to 1921 was the Mean Sea Level at the Victoria Dock in Liverpool, a level no doubt now vulnerable to climate change.

The innovative engineer Willis would have been intrigued by the Report's apparatuses for related measurements and various technical devices for dating, for example :

> Archaeomagnetic date. [theodolite magnetic compass]
> The hearth, sealing a Period 4A construction trench, can be dated to 900- 70 at 95 percent confidence (920-58 to 68 percent confidence). The hearth may be associated with construction work relating to the Period 4B Cathedral. It provides a *terminus ad quem* for the Period 4A levelling, and *terminus post quem* for the overlying charnel pit. The latter is thought to have been contemporary with the Period 4C construction of the western structure. (p. 23)
>
> Geophysical survey in the Great Cloister.
> A grid of sixteen complete and partial 10 m. boxes was established, aligned north-south across the cloister garth. The total coverage of the grid was obtained, while respecting the minimum probe separation. The area was surveyed using a Geoscan RM 15 Basic Resistance Meter using twin electrode configuration with a 0.5 m. mobile probe separation enabling a maximum penetration of 0.75 to 1 m. Sample readings were recorded at 0.5 m. intervals along consecutive north-south oriented traverses separated by 1 m. intervals. (p. 209)

One wryly recalls William Somner asking his next-door neighbour for a broken Roman tile found while digging in his garden.

after images

Recently complementing and even replacing received forms of measuring archaeological sites and recording excavated buildings are various laser scanning cameras which enable the reconstruction in digital 3-D and in almost unbelievable micro-detail both the exterior and interior even of such complex constructions as Hagia Sophia in Istanbul, the great Giza pyramid, the enormous tufar mines beneath Naples, or the secret passageway linking the centre of Florence to the Medici palace on the far side of the Arno.

Add to these developments the possibilities of satellite archaeology or the perhaps dubious acceleration of excavations exemplified by the BBC Time Team programmes, including one at Canterbury Whitefriars. In the three Burnby guide-book editions both Duncombe's poetic elegy and the imitated layout of the epitaphs might be regarded as a poor man's substitute for Dart's expensive prints, and by comparison with what is currently possible even the vastly improved resolution of today's digital photography might now be seen as a kind of poor man's engraving. Canterbury Cathedral still has to wait its turn for a full laser scan.

The 1997 Canterbury Archaeological Trust report at least had the advantage of being able to include 35 mm. photographs as well as meticulous measured drawings, a combination in printing not easily available to Willis, despite the famous contemporaneous photographs of

the cathedral by Frith, which like eighteenth-century engravings have since enjoyed a commercial value as independent commodities. The colour photograph on the front cover of the CAT report shows the curving line of an Anglo-Saxon stone apse uncovered at the western end of the nave, arguably the single most memorable of the images deriving from the excavation.

The ninety-three photographic plates in the centre of the volume are largely arranged in the order of the differentiated chronological periods, so that the plates depicting the Romano-British layers are placed first and a photograph of the state of the nave just prior to the start of the excavation is located at the end of the sequence. This series of plates, which follows the order of the text, can however be read in the reverse direction, to visually indicate more or less the progress of the various stages of the excavation itself, following the successive uncovering of layers as the dig proceeded, although the investigations of the previously filled-in graves complicate this photographic sequencing.

The photographs themselves now have a rather strange status. It is often the case that an archaeological site will be re-covered after an excavation is concluded, and in archaeological investigations required under planning permissions for a new building the site itself may afterwards become wholly inaccessible. Within the cathedral it is now possible to walk upon the new paving stones in the nave while being acutely conscious of what lies almost immediately beneath one's feet, including that now once-again-invisible stone apse, together with an awareness that in addition to the many monuments to the dead now decorating the walls of the nave there are perhaps a hundred evacuated grave locations underneath the new floor. These remain, in some elusive sense, still part of the cemetery and of the building.

Yet it is now only the photographs which make them even indirectly accessible to us. That the images are photographs and not simply line-drawings undoubtedly contributes to one's sense of the near presence of these underground layers. The photos may even be thought of as acting rather like a baseline visual O.D. from which we assess, as non-specialist readers, the numerous detailed drawings of what else the archaeologists found, and left, beneath the pavement level. The photo of the apse is, in effect, the object itself as far as we now know it.

Recall here that Anglo-Saxon charters or other mediaeval legal agreements were once themselves not only objects in the sense that any physical manuscript is an object but also that they were the legal evidences of a continuing fact, not primarily a narrative of an event – that a particular King once gave a particular piece of land to the monastery – and that possession of that piece of parchment was itself a legal title to the continuing possession of the land in question or to the exercise of the rights inscribed in the physical document.

To be able to show that a copy or a translation was also an authentic proof of such possession or of the exercise of such rights necessitated that the original be still available to be compared, or that some corresponding act of authentification could remove any suspicion or accusation of the alleged charter or its copy being a forgery. Having a physical banknote in one's pocket may still be some (mistaken) assurance that the promise of the Chief Cashier of the Bank of England 'to pay the bearer on demand' will be honoured if you present an actual banknote across a counter, expressing a residual resistance to the notion that all trade can be reliably conducted by flourishing a piece of electronically charged plastic. Minted coins were, after all, among the first means of providing archaeologists with reliable evidence of datable strata. A royal or imperial image on a coin may provide a resolution of chronological uncertainty. The Luidhard medal may even have been a coin.

Photographic archaeological illustration is another variation upon the process by which an object however precisely described in writing can more 'immediately' be represented by an image, whether a drawing, print, or photograph, which may or may not incorporate text and other elements of identification such as the measuring rods visibly included in standard archaeological site photographs.

The inclusion in Burnby of 'A View of the South Prospect of the Cathedral' or the diagrams in Willis which were diligently coloured in by the previous owner of my copy (Charles Cotton, himself an editor of Gervase's tract), are instances where 'the object itself' is substituted by a different kind of object, a working replacement. But would a digital reconstruction of a whole building be itself an 'object' or only a set of instructions formulated at machine-code level in binary numbers? What if my half-awareness of the buried layers beneath the Cathedral nave were transformed into an 'augmented reality' in which I could experience optical overlays of the different phases and versions of the cathedral upon my current perception of it? And what if the cathedral were then destroyed?

We are familiar with the notion of pseudo-objects in which a process is characterised as if it were an object, an activity as a noun, as the act of thinking is nominalised as 'a thought', or an accumulation of precedents is regarded as some kind of 'constitution', and perhaps most radically an alleged prehistoric event, whether involving a serpent and apple or not, can be turned into a permanent fault, an original sin. The fact that every section of the cathedral has at one time or another been demolished and replaced may remind us of the legend concerning a ship (*navis*) which was entirely rebuilt from prow to stern and from cargo-hold to mast-head while still sailing on a voyage.

Are we to conclude that 'the Cathedral' is actually comprised not only of the building into which we can enter as tourists or even pilgrims, but also as layered over, however consciously or not in our own awareness, with

various kinds of augmented reality persisting in several different ways, the present and the past but also indeed the future.

If Chaucer's pilgrims had arrived in, say 1381, the year of the peasants' revolt, they would have seen only a half-constructed future nave:

> by the summer of 1381 only the outer walls of the eastern five or six bays of both [nave] aisles had been completed. The main nave piers may not even have been started at this time. (p. 132)

The overall summary of the CAT report concludes that:

> The main body of Archbishop Lanfranc's nave was demolished west of the crossing in 1377, leaving the two western corner-towers standing. The south-west tower was rebuilt from 1424, the north-west tower remained standing to 1832. Other fragments left standing include the north wall of the nave, the piers of the central tower, parts of the east chapels and large parts of the North West transept. These were left intact since only a rebuilding of the nave was initially contemplated. The large mid-twelfth century crossing tower (with golden angel on top) was left standing as were the transepts. The south-west transept was rebuilt soon after the completion of the nave in 1405. The survival of the north-west transept owes a great deal to its popularity as a place of pilgrimage (being the site of the murder of Archbishop Thomas Becket in 1170). Rebuilding of the nave took place on the foundations of Archbishop Lanfranc's cathedral, with designs probably by Henry Yvele . . . The only change in the ground plan was the offsetting of the piers on the north arcade, and responds on the north wall, 0.3 metres to the south of the earlier foundations. (p. 33)

As we also know from the discovery of that stone apse:

> To avoid major removal of the earlier masonry, the foundations of the Norman cathedral had been placed, were possible, between the Anglo-Saxon foundations. The north foundation-wall was probably set between the north wall foundation and the north arcade foundations of the Anglo-Saxon Cathedral; the south arcade foundation removed most of the south wall of the Anglo-Saxon church, but was set to the south of its wide south arcaded foundation. Thus, by a judicious adjustment of the centreline of the cathedral, 5 m. south of the original, all but one of the main east-west Anglo-Saxon foundations was avoided (page 24)

In summary (p. 5):

> A new cathedral was constructed from 1071, on the same alignment but set just 5 m. south of the cathedral axis of the Anglo-Saxon church

> to avoid its foundations. A substantial part of the foundations for the nave and south-west transept of the Norman church was uncovered, including the plan of the cruciform pier bases. Large areas of floor bedding mortar survived indicating the original layout of the Norman floor.

So if, the next time I stroll down the middle of the nave, I take a few steps to the south I will be standing on what was the centre line of Lanfranc's now invisible nave. Even if, like Gostling's incised processional lines, that line is no longer 'there'.

reflections

I have been trying to interweave two motifs, focussing upon the most elementary features of how a history can be written, as a matter of composition, but in relation also to the more elusive questions raised by a concern with death, and in particular with how notions of time serve to link history and death while our conceptions of death and history in turn problematise our understanding of time. Needless to say, the composition of this long essay is itself deliberately not straight-forward.

Shortly after first entering the nave we considered the plaque listing archbishops as registering a process of 'succession', each sitting in the chair (*cathedra*) vacated by his predecessor, and extended that notion to yesterday's visitors being replaced in a kind of ghostly succession by those visiting today. And on a larger scale the living might be seen as 'taking the place' of the dead who have either departed from or entered into 'history', yet whose memorials proclaim that they are still in some sense present with us, and they now, as some believe, possibly exist in some ordered a-temporal mode, or perhaps in a peculiarly not quite so a-temporal condition in a location once called purgatory. But is 'history itself' a succession, allowing an orderly narration of what happened and when?

An alternative notion has suggested itself, that the past and present might be conceived of as layered but co-existent, as in an archaeological investigation. Battely's 1703 text operates as a revised layer upon and within Somner's 1640 text, Urry's topographical maps make visible a buried but persistent ground-plan of the city, and we now walk only on a sort of thin top layer of the nave. By this stage, of course, my own frustrated reader may recall the several authors so far discussed only as rather ill-fittingly superimposed upon each other. I have been using the cathedral as itself a kind of layered text, perhaps rather as a 1778 sermon in St Andrew's parish church Canterbury by the versatile John Duncombe used as its 'text' an Old Testament quotation concerning the war between the Israelites and the Benjamites and inventively applied it to the American War of Independence. A familiar eighteenth century sermon device.

So should 'the Cathedral' be rather thought of as a multi-media history book, layered and constructed in a multi-dimensional augmented reality? Should all history texts necessarily be composed or at least recognised as palimpsests? But in what sense might we conceive of 'history' as co-existing layers rather than as successive re-placements?

The varied 'components' of the several accounts of the cathedral I have been tracing indicate the persisting problem of how the various elements which can constitute such an account may themselves be permutated, re-orchestrated, reorganised, in order to provide a 'methodical progression' through varied compositional forms, including the difficulty of articulating the relationship between processes and persons in such a way that we can accommodate both a sense of an almost inevitable meshing and of an unavoidable misfit, as perhaps with Eadmer's two-fold Anselm.

There appears to be no normal, steady, unproblematic 'succession' of one Archbishop after another, but more often a displacement of A not by B but by some relatively unforeseen X or Q, as also in the shifting fortunes of aristocratic inheritance and royal genealogy, or in the repeated unexpectedness of premature deaths and occasional conflagrations which, whatever the expectations or ambitions of an incoming Archbishop or Prior, necessitate prompt or reluctant attention to such mundane matters as overseeing a building site.

The temptation is to write retrospectively, as if it were somehow the fate of Anselm to be responsible for a new choir, or that Becket's death was always on the cards, if only because these are now the unmissable highlights of the normal narrative guide for visitors. And it is always much harder to articulate or communicate the levels of quotidian changes registered by a daily liturgical bell or a business clock. Even the making of a new gate which marks a boundary or division between two stretches of perfectly ordinary earth, even if one is regarded as sacred, seems to have been partly prompted by everyday exasperation at the cluttered buildings around the previous gateway only a few yards further along the Burgate.

There is a partial assonance between Somner's problem of compositional method and the Foxe and Bale problem of combining a polemical history with a developing logic of dogma, which they tried to resolve by appropriating the overarching framework of an apocalyptic destiny to be deciphered from the text of the Johannine Apocalypse, with the implication that every detail could in principle be linked to a divinely ordained destiny even if the significance of any particular occasion, event, or incident might have to wait to be revealed on the final day of judgement.

The Old Testament itself constitutes a complex and composite book, indeed *the* book, including laws, chronicles, poems, stories, fables, military dispatches, prophetic sayings, and personal lamentations, all of which are traditionally attributed to a single omniscient author able somehow to synthesise these multiple genres.

There has long been a more secular ambition to attain to a totalising history, both as universal overview and as a systematic philosophy or rigorous concept of history. Against this, there is the rueful notion that there is no more a coherent concept of 'history' than there is a concept of Being, or indeed of 'the Cathedral'. The writing of history might be conceived of as only a fragile configuration, or in Benjamin's term a constellation, of different disciplines or specialisms, and 'history itself' as an unstable combinatory of processes and practices which though they might be represented as intersecting are actually generated by fundamentally disconnected factors, not least by different temporalities or tempos.

At its simplest, say, any attempt to publish a global newspaper just for a single day's issue would involve not only an immense front page with numerous disparate headlines but also the need to contextualise each reported headline item by providing a welter of separate story-lines covering the longer and shorter duration of the processes which have led to each headline of the day. Coherently orchestrating the entirety of internet news on a single day would clearly test even the most artificial of intelligences.

However, a variation upon both totalising syncretism and apocalyptic framework would be to argue that there is some ongoing foundational basis for historical occurrences, such as Marx's notion of the economic system as providing an explanation, 'in the last instance', for political and cultural activities, the realm of the economic being itself analysable in terms of systemic features and coherent logics and logistics. But in which case how does change occur at all? Which also implies the question of how far one discipline is proposed as under-girding or even explaining the findings of another, as providing the primary skeleton upon which other contributions can be assembled. The metaphor here is anatomical but a more influential analogy has been an architectural or even archaeological one.

In the same year as the Canterbury archaeological conference, 1844, the young Karl Marx was beginning his long intellectual struggle, which I would partly characterise as an attempt to arrive at some comprehensive mode of combining the many modalities of historical investigation. The requisite converging of disciplines entails combining very different kinds of evidence in the composition, the literal written form, of any actual account. How the 'components' are related to each other is shaped in part by a preferred explanatory framework and by the choice of questions to be investigated, but also in Marx's very writing of 'history' (or 'theory' or 'political economy'), by his abiding metaphor which can be regarded variously as drawn from archaeological, engineering, or architectural usage, that of 'base' or foundation and 'superstructure'.

As it happens, Robert Willis gave regular courses of lectures to working men in London between 1854 and 1867. The exiled Karl Marx, just then labouring at *Das Kapital*, was an appreciative subscriber to the series. Arguably, Marx's materialist theory took shape not only as an ostensibly explanatory causative account of 'history' but as providing a structure for

his own peculiar treatise, a way of organising a complicated overall historical-philosophical thesis, a working solution to a writing problem.

Marx's emphasis upon the material foundations of a social way of life might well illuminate, rather more than Willis did, the relationship between the fabric of the cathedral and the primarily devotional and intellectual activities of those who passed their lives within it. Nevertheless, it would surely be hard to argue that the kind of theological work produced in the mediaeval monastery was directly inflected by the working practices imposed by the cloister, whereas living in one's very own family household in the post-Reformation precinct made a crucial difference to the theological style of 18th century cathedral sermons.

When however we consider the later Marx's comprehension of the structural role of temporal processes in the production, distribution, and circulation of commodities, and in the core un-equal exchange of productive working time for profitably incommensurate wages, it is possible to see that a capitalist-economic society is analysable in terms of complex interactions and simultaneous layerings of different interacting tempos which are systemically integrated but also vulnerable to a kind of radical mis-timing. For Marx, capitalist time is always out of joint. The notion of a logic driving the buying and selling of labour-time provides an analytical framework which is at the same time (sic) a basis for the polemical-political implications of his historical methodology.

Marx's materialist transformation of Hegelian idealist philosophy opened another phase in the development of thinking about history. Broadly speaking we have been tracking a set of basic problems, or a sequence of preoccupations, which have shaped historical writing, from the construction of narrative, to polemical contests, from the accumulative mode of the chronicle and the antiquarian to the development of micro-local histories, including even attempts to write the history of individual houses as in a recent television series, while efforts have also been made to write global history or to displace grand narratives of human activity by more ecologically-focused geo-temporal accounts.

Some of these approaches have constituted further variations upon a fundamentally archaeological metaphor or model, including current emphases upon the persistence of different temporal rhythms, of natural and historical processes each with its own tempo. Engels once prepared a speech to the Irish Fenian Brotherhood by researching the geological strata which eventually were to provide coal for the English industrial revolution but not for Ireland, thereby condemning the Irish to continuing English domination.

But it is misleading to conceive of temporal rhythms as akin to archaeological strata or layers, or to think of one temporality as somehow causing or even supporting another temporal 'layer'. If we broadly move from the notion of succession to that of layers, there is a temptation then to move further from the idea of an ongoing multilayered present to that of

different temporalities or tempos somehow superimposed upon each other, with the question of how different times interlock or integrate, and how the various disparate tempos of materials and their related processes sustain each other, even in some sense reciprocally, a structural causality not simply from a uni-linear perspective but in the form of reiterated feedback. More like one of Willis's mechanical models or Clerk Maxwell's force field than even the most self-sustaining cathedral architecture.

This offers only a variation upon issues already explored. In what sense can one allocate even reciprocal causal efficacy to particular strata as Marx wanted to deploy the metaphor of foundation or base as necessary support and effective cause of the superstructure built upon it? And how far can one discipline be regarded as the bedrock of all other disciplines which are in some sense dependent upon or referable to it? As in the claims of quantum mechanics that all of physics or chemistry can and must be eventually resolved to the level of the quantum, or at least in less confident mode to the subatomic particle, with perhaps no common configuration of space-time across the threshold of the quantum.

The occasional use by Marx of the term 'presupposition' was an attempt (dialectically, of course) to formulate a kind of two-way causal direction: the emergence of capitalism as dependent upon processes which are themselves generated by capitalism, so that it is futile to seek some determinate point of origin even if we recognise that older models of an entire systemic replacement of feudalism by capitalism and finally by socialism or communism are as problematic as John Foxe's overall biblical schemata.

The methodological and conceptual problem may itself be unresolvable in that even an exposition cannot be formulated without abandoning the linear mode, common to both historical narrative and analytical argument. Only if it were feasible to present a case without differentially prioritising, either logically or in order of presentation, the multiple interacting and simultaneous layers of effectivity would it be possible to claim that some presentation of a 'resolution' had at least compositionally succeeded.

There was a time when the potential of hyper-text could be postulated as initiating a fundamental shift in conceptual thought or even mental patterning, and it may still be the case that parallel processing as the mode in which machine intelligence can best be realised acts as a kind of metaphor, if nothing more, for the possibility of that elusive totalisation which Hegel glimpsed or which emerged in the pre-Hegel notion sometimes attributed to Nicholas de Cusa that the entire universe exists only as *tota simul*. In which case not only history but time would be a literally superficial delusion. As the ageing Godel argued with Einstein in their final conversations.

Yet it is also clear that even to conceive of one tempo necessarily 'presupposes' another, since the only way to measure a length, a distance, a time period, is to match what is being measured with some other comparable process which acts as the measuring scale. As Aristotle

suggested in his analysis of the notion of simultaneity, 'at the same time', in *Physics* V. As with zero A.D. or an archaeological Ordnance Datum there is no given or natural or ultimate measure against which all measurements are to be calibrated.

The notion that one thing is happening 'at the same time' as another requires an *a priori* which Einstein's relativity theory was finally to undermine. The concept of a numerical sequence, that numbers 'succeed' each other, raises questions we can best consider later in connection with the thirteenth-century philosopher-scientist John Pecham, the only Franciscan Archbishop buried in the cathedral. That Gervase can give an account of the order in which the choir columns were erected is a feature of the mode of consecutive narrative he is operating within, whereas an actual sequence of work undertaken in a certain order can become and remain a way of simultaneously holding up the roof of the choir, an ongoing effectivity finally independent of the order of construction.

At least, the notion of 'entering history' can in practice be supplemented or accompanied by the idea of almost suspending one's engagement with the historical. One attraction of a visit to the cathedral may be that of apparently having nothing to do with one's time, in both senses: the classical notion of 'otium' as leisure time with nothing better to do than waste it in some enjoyable mode. The daily life of the monks was supposedly characterised by a degree of contemplative relaxation in meditation and prayer, whatever the intensity of their other practical or intellectual activities. By at least entering, if not into history, into the location of their 'withdrawal from the world' we might at least enjoy a glimpse of why standing in the nave and admiring its architecture can seem the closest we might get to an a-temporal experience.

Perhaps, after all, the only way of finally entering history is to die. Death may not be a threshold, gate, or entrance to some after-life but if there was a temptation before death to try to compose as comprehensive a 'history' as possible, a totalisation of the known, at least one can recognise that what is, literally, after one's own life-time is indeed the unknown, what is to happen after my death does not figure in my history, still less in my knowledge of it.

Karl Marx once walked over from a holiday in Margate to Canterbury to look at the cathedral, and given the state of it at the time and the fact that Marx was familiar with Notre Dame in Paris and the wonderful Cologne Cathedral it's not surprising that he was not impressed. But perhaps even Marx would have been deeply surprised that a hundred years later a so-called 'Red Dean of Canterbury' was using the cathedral as a platform for proclaiming a communist future. What if there is a further variation upon the notion that the historical is what no longer exists? What of the historical event which does not yet exist?

*

THE RED DEAN

There were several historians associated with Canterbury Cathedral in the 20th century. The final figure I want to focus on might be regarded as not a historian at all, though I consider him as attempting to write what Eadmer termed *historia novorum,* the history of his own times. Since Dr. Hewlett Johnson was the Dean of Canterbury Cathedral for over thirty years it may seem surprising that his understanding of history was explicitly Marxist as well as Christian. His work raises issues not just about 'what happened' in history, and 'which version' of specific historical events one might propagate, but a more extensive question: within what kind of framework can one think about 'history' at all.

Let me introduce him by quoting from a biographical summary published in 1981 by the University of Kent Library to celebrate the acquisition of an extraordinary collection of documents from Hewlett Johnson's personal archive, including letters from and accounts of meetings with Stalin, Mao Tsetung, Che Guevara, Fidel Castro, Ghandi, and American Presidents including Truman. Quite how a Dean of Canterbury acquired such a worldwide correspondence will become clearer.

> Hewlett Johnson was born in 1874 in Kersal, then a fashionable suburb two miles from the centre of Manchester, where . . 'carriage' folk lived within easy reach of warehouses and offices. 'My family were of the prosperous middle class.' He took a BSc. in engineering at Manchester in 1894 and was apprenticed at the family engineering works. He became an undergraduate again at Oxford in 1901 and read theology. In 1905 he married Mary Taylor, founded and edited a monthly theological magazine *The Interpreter*, and was ordained to the parish of St Margaret's Altrincham by his great supporter, Bishop Jayne of Chester. In 1908 he was promoted to the living by its lay rector, the Earl of Starnford, a life-long Socialist peer, who was to become one of Hewlett's most faithful supporters and friends. Altrincham was an upper middle-class suburban Manchester parish, and, for the nineteen years Hewlett ministered there, he showed himself to be an outstanding parish priest. …
>
> As an undergraduate, confronted with Darwinian theories of evolution, he had turned against the fundamentalist Christianity of his childhood. But gradually he recovered a deep personal faith and was gripped by the principles of Christian Socialism. He espoused the cause of the under-fed, the badly-housed, the ill-educated, the sick, the politically under-privileged and the socially despised. . .
>
> In 1917 he had chaired a Manchester meeting, with Bertrand Russell as the principal speaker to welcome the overthrow of the Czarist regime in Russia, and his adherence to left-wing political beliefs had never wavered. He had been attacked in the press and even by his

> much loved brother-in-law for his pacifist stand during the First World War, but his chaplaincy of a P.O.W. camp, and Mary's outstanding work as Commandant of a military hospital, earned them both general respect. He waged constant campaigns in Manchester, but he won the friendship of people from all parties, leading industrialists, bishops, his fellow clergy and his own people.

In 1924, under the aegis of left-leaning Bishop William Temple, Johnson was made Dean of Manchester Cathedral. The account continues:

> Newspaper cuttings [in the University archive collection] from the period 1924 – 1930 give a vivid picture of a Dean whose Cathedral was opened up to children, to theatre people and to debates on social issues. Hewlett spoke and preached on the cooperative movement, on slum clearance, on clean air, on holiday camps for disadvantaged young people and on his great hope for a truly lively working out of the Christian Gospel which he believed could be achieved in liberated Russia. . .
>
> In 1931 Mary died, which both devastated him personally and inspired him to further endeavour in his Christian and social work. . . Largely because of Mary's death and the emptiness which Manchester now had for Hewlett, William Temple urged the Archbishop of Canterbury, Cosmo Lang, to sanction the appointment [in 1931] of Hewlett to the Deanery of Canterbury to succeed the mortally sick Dick Shepperd.

Given that record, the appointment was, to put it mildly, controversial. However, according to this account:

> During the next thirty years the ceremony, the music, the art and the drama of Canterbury Cathedral were completely revitalised. Gerald Knight, the young pre-war organist, and singers like Alfred Deller made Canterbury paramount in English Cathedral music; Clive Pare, the brilliant young headmaster of the choir school, injected a new vitality into Anglican Church education and, above all, Joseph Poole raised the dignity and ceremony of the Cathedral to heights it had lacked for decades. Canterbury became the fit setting for services in times of national mourning, national celebration and national concern. It became the focal point of care for the unemployed, refugees and of prayer for the nation in the greatest possible danger.

It was during Johnson's deanship that the 1935 Canterbury Festival sponsored Eliot's *Murder in the Cathedral.* Meanwhile:

> Hewlett, who had been very involved with Civil War Spain, and was the author of a swingeing attack on Hitler and Fascism, an organiser of aid to Spanish refugees, friend of Gandhi, instigator of aid to devastated China, co-worker with M.P.s, aristocrats and liberal organisations of all kinds, became in 1933 the spokesman for the cause of Soviet Communism.

This is, obviously, a somewhat sympathetic account. Not surprisingly, there have been several attempts to write the biography of such a 'controversial' figure. In recounting further facts about Johnson's life I will give page references to John Butler's *The Red Dean* (2011) and to Robert Hughes' *The Red Dean* (1987) and also draw upon Hewlett Johnson's own various political and autobiographical writings.

propaganda fidei

By some reckonings, Hewlett Johnson was one of the best-selling authors of his time. Notoriously, he wrote a series of books extolling the Soviet Union and Johnson claimed that his first such book, *The Socialist Sixth of the World*, sold over four million copies world-wide, translated into twenty-five languages. In the UK alone it went through twenty-two impressions from December 1939 to March 1947, selling about 250,000 copies. Published in the USA in January 1941 as *The Soviet Power*, a further 250,000 copies were printed and its American publishers claimed that a cheaper edition of the book had a million copies 'in circulation' within a few weeks. Commenting on these claims, however, John Butler (p. 80) queries how far such figures were inflated, or perhaps represent sales subsidised by the Communist Party of America.

Johnson was also an outstandingly successful public speaker. For example, a post-war speaking tour of America culminated in a huge rally in Madison Square Garden in New York, described in a *Manchester Guardian* report by Alistair Cooke, which Butler (p. 172) quotes from a clipping in the Johnson archive:

> Four blinding shafts of blue converge on the entrance. The crowd comes to its feet craning, gabbling all the dialects of Central Europe and the accents of Manhattan, the Bronx and Brooklyn. And suddenly he is standing there, black and bland and towering, his hair spun smooth as cotton candy, a huge crucifix glittering on his chest. The gasps expand into cheers as two ideas come together: he looks like a divinity and he looks like the portrait on every dollar bill. He is George Washington, canonised and dropped from heaven.
>
> It takes three minutes for decent calm. He puts his script down and disdains it for fifty minutes. He starts slowly, in a cathedral mono-tone, warning them of the daily grind of the war nobody wants – the blitzed

children, the gassed Jews of Auschwitz, the third-degree scar of Hiroshima. His tone abruptly changes. He has been in Eastern Europe. Come with me, he says, as his pink face glows with the tender memory: in Hungary, the secret ballot, the upright invigilators; in Rumania, medicine for all, one whole year of every doctor's life dedicated to the peasants; in Armenia, religious farmers, fine daughters at school till sixteen, everybody reading *War and Peace*. Always he returns to the source from which these blessings flow – the Soviet Union, whose only 'invasions' have been of great liberties: the right to work, the right to education, the right to health free for all. These are 'the liberties that alone can crown our great liberties of the West'.

He pauses and smiles inwardly. Some of my good people at Canterbury, he says like a father recalling the sweet confusions of his favourite child, say I minimise our Western liberties. He throws out his long arms, spreads the bony fingers, and bellows: 'Who am I to minimise these things? I who go to bed at night beside the bones of Thomas a Becket, who died for liberty, and Stephen Langton, who forced King John to sign Magna Carta?' There is a laughing roar from the people who have never heard of Becket but who see in this defiant priest the sanction of their own un-American defiance, who think of priests in the old country slaughtered or decayed, who see not a twentieth-century Anglican but their own forsaken Church reincarnated from medieval Bohemia and liberated tonight in – glory be – Madison Square Garden.

He waves the applause aside as an argument thrashed and done with. He is on the verge of his essential appeal. There are many dark things about Russia, yes, but 'we ignore the beauty of the much greater things because of that horror.' In the end, when we stand before the judgement seat, it will be Christ's great standard or nothing. Will it be: did you attend church regularly? His great nostrils dilate in unspeakable scorn. 'No.' Will it be: did you say your prayers every night and morn? 'No.' Again the predatory hands embrace the whole audience, wheezing in the dark. It will be: 'I was naked. What have you done about that? I was sick. What have you done about that? What have you done about human need?'

The roof seemed to fall in on him. Again he was bland and stiffly bowing. Again the blue spots converged. And the cheers leaped and sprayed benedictions all around him.

[*Manchester Guardian,* 13 January, 1949, HJ Archive 3507]

Cooke's account combines a degree of admiration for a superb fellow-showman with a political scepticism or scornful cynicism verging on patronising contempt. It was, by the standards of the criticism and attacks Johnson had become used to, almost generous.

Between his numerous global travels to deliver similar arousing orations, Johnson regularly preached in Canterbury Cathedral as his office as Dean required. At the age of 82, in 1956, he published his latest book, *Christians and Communism*, compiled from fifteen characteristic sermons, variations upon those he had preached in the Cathedral ever since his appointment in 1931. The pulpit in the nave did not offer him quite the same huge audience as Madison Square Garden but afforded considerable scope for publicity.

As is proper to sermons, each begins with a biblical verse or two. The first sermon cites: 'By their fruits you shall know them' (Matthew 7.20) and 'When they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny' (Matthew 20.9). There are only two other quotations in the sermon, both from Karl Marx: that the first phase of socialism is defined as 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his work', while the later stage of communism comprises: 'From each according to his ability; to each according to his need.' The rest of the sermon weaves connections between these two sets of quotations.

Johnson can here speak for himself, with a few passages from other sermons in the same book:

> The damage of ill-directed big money is incalculable. In a thousand ways, unobserved by the common man the money directors get away with it. Reforms which impinge on the rights of property must be rejected. Great schemes laid aside. Valuable patents put in cold storage.
>
> Why for instance was the Severn barrage which would have supplied vast quantities of electric power never completed? It was due to the acquisitiveness of colliery proprietors and the vested interests in coal. England, ringed with tides, as Bernard Shaw says, could provide abundance of electric power today totally independent of our supplies of coal. Why was not big money applied to these projects? Simply because there was no great profit to be made out of them and they would negate other profits.
>
> Jesus knew what He was saying when He said: 'You cannot serve God and Mammon.' Science has given the power to create wealth upon a scale never known before. To harness this knowledge, to take just one illustration, in order to create a good life for all would require the expenditure of a vast amount of capital and a world-wide plan. How much? Lord Boyd-Orr tells us. Just one tenth of the world expenditure on armaments today.
>
> Lord Boyd-Orr adds as illustration, that when the application of automation to the automobile industry is completed the labour force needed will be reduced from one million to 200,000. What holds it up here? Partly the need of an assured market to make the capital

expenditure safe and that can only be secured by a planned economy. But partly also the fear of unemployment. In Russia that fear never operates. There is and can be no unemployment in a planned socialist economy. Hence Russia can lead the way and does so, and now at the eleventh hour we have to follow. (pp. 98-9)

I have known all along that the ruthless fighting in Cyprus, with its banishment of clergy, its shootings of children and its destruction of villages – in despite of all our western protestations of self-determination of peoples – is in the interests of oil, a commercial interest. Oil, we are told, is our lifeline. So we fiercely compete with native states for the oil, which is by good rights the property of the land where it is found, and we compete with the United States, our own ally, more subtly perhaps, for the control of the oil of the east. Here is the very breeding ground of wars.

Who can deny that the capitalist world in which we live is a world of war, and often ruthless war, and as such diametrically opposed to the mode of life which Jesus propounded. (p. 141)

It is not surprising that such sermons prompted not just fierce disagreement with their specific political content but furious objections to an Anglican Dean uttering them at all from the pulpit of Canterbury Cathedral.

In his first year as Dean of Canterbury in 1931, Johnson was castigated by some as attacking not only capitalism but the British Empire itself. On a visit to Britain, supported by some Christian groups but vilified by the pro-Empire press (see Hughes p. 65f.), Mahatma Gandhi visited Canterbury and was invited by Johnson to attend Evensong. As an honoured guest, he sat in the stall next to the Dean. Some of the Cathedral Canons promptly claimed that it was deeply offensive that someone who was publicly a non-Christian should be welcomed at a Christian occasion and they refused an invitation to meet Gandhi at the Deanery that evening. Their own reaction may not, of course, have been entirely non-political.

In 1934 Johnson's efforts had for once received unexpectedly wide support (Hughes pp. 82-86). In April a suggestion was forwarded to him by the very respectable Deputy Assistant Secretary of the National Council for Social Service, Sir Wyndham Deedes, proposing a 'Cathedral Pilgrimage for the Unemployed'. By mid-May the scheme was launched, with a notification published in *The Times*, written in familiar Johnson style:

We are seeking, and we ought to seek, radical remedies for the modern problem of want amidst plenty. We refuse to acquiesce in poverty. The sheer physical facts of abundance warrant a fundamental optimism. We welcome eagerly the age of solar power [*NB: in 1934.*] and the machine which we are assured will lift the burden from human backs, and we pursue the search for a distributive machinery which, through planning

or through monetary reform, or otherwise, shall change the curse of unemployment for some into the boon of leisure for all . .

Pilgrims at one time flocked to Cathedral shrines and offered their gifts. Why not organise a pilgrimage on a scale vaster than ever the past has known, where each pilgrim can visit the Cathedral of his or her choice? . . From July 1 to July 14 (inclusive) the Great West Door of Canterbury Cathedral will be opened and set apart as a pilgrim door; it will offer its welcome at any hour of any day to any Pilgrim that may arrive . . Pilgrim-tickets costing half-a-crown, and less for children, will be on sale throughout the land. Every penny of every ticket will go through the National Council of Social Service and the Personal Service League to swell the funds available for relief work in the distressed and derelict areas.

The journey on a July day to visit some of the noblest monuments inherited from the past, speaking now as they always have done throughout the ages of Eternal things and of the Eternal Love and Pity . . will be full of joy and inspiration. It will have served its deeper purpose, too, if it sends us back with courage and determination to rid our land of the poverty which shames it, and make available for all the plenty and the leisure which is God's gift for the era in which we live.

As Hughes recounts:

Two days later *The Times* printed a letter from twenty-nine cathedrals who wished to follow Canterbury's lead. A week later, Hewlett reported to his Committee that forty cathedrals were involved in the scheme. Pilgrim tickets were on sale at railway stations, through Thomas Cook, Pickfords, W.H. Smith and Boots. By June 6th the number of Cathedrals, Minsters and Abbeys involved had risen to forty-five and the final total was fifty-five. The Lord Mayor of London agreed to journey to Canterbury and the Royal Family to inaugurate the National Pilgrimage by visiting Westminster Abbey.

On other occasions there was to be no such Establishment support. Johnson had visited Spain during the civil war and had personally witnessed the bombing of Durango by Hitler's Luftwaffe, three days before the similar attack on Guernica. Butler writes (p. 71f.):

On his return from Spain, Hewlett Johnson threw himself into the task of publicising the plight of the Basque people and mobilising relief. He preached about the civil war in Canterbury Cathedral and spoke passionately on behalf of the Republican government at meetings throughout the country. He also took a lead in organising a Christian Committee for Food to Spain to coordinate the work of local

organisations raising funds for a food-ship to breach the blockade of Bilbao.

In April 1937, after Johnson preached a passionate sermon in Canterbury Cathedral about the war in Spain, Archbishop Cosmo Lang wrote to him (quoted from HJ Archive in Butler, p. 71):

> I cannot but think it unfortunate that a man in your very responsible position should have so openly identified yourself with one side in this most unhappy Spanish trouble when the whole weight of the country is being thrown on the side of preserving impartiality and so assisting in the prevention of foreign intervention which might lead to even graver consequences. As to [the sermon in Canterbury Cathedral], I think I know myself what you mean when you say such words as: 'It does not matter what people say with their lips, even if it means denying that there is a God, if they have religion in their hearts'. But phrases of this kind are obviously bound to give rise to serious misunderstanding.

It was a relatively mild rebuke but it foreshadowed others. In 1940 Johnson preached a sermon in Westminster Abbey in which he declared that Communism had recovered 'the essential form of the real belief in God which organised Christianity has so largely lost'. This was too much for the Canons of Canterbury Cathedral and they threatened a public disavowal. Archbishop Lang intervened with another letter to Johnson (quoted from HJ Archive in Butler, p. 94):

> My object therefore in writing this letter is to address to you a most earnest plea that for the sake of the harmony of your Chapter and of the spiritual interests of your Cathedral you may be willing to reconsider your position and . . to intimate to your colleagues that you will not continue the activities which are causing them and many others so much real distress. If you can assure me that you are willing so to do, I think I can promise that the contemplated letter [from the canons] to the Press will not be sent.

Johnson's firm reply argued that the Church of England was hardly in a position to insist upon a separation between politics and religion:

> Don't you yourself, my Lord Archbishop, in the name of Canterbury, wield immense political influence, and do not the twenty-four Bishops who sit with you in the House of Lords speak with powerful political voice in the affairs of the country and exercise the right to assent to or veto every bill a popularly elected assembly sends up to you? . . I only urge the right of voices on either side to be heard. . . I cannot assent to their [the canons'] request to resign my office and cease to speak of

> Russia during the war. I can accept no censorship on freedom of speech nor relinquish an office committed to me as a charge. If to speak openly concerning these matters, and to ask for such government as would inaugurate a Christian alternative, is 'political activity', I must accept the charge.

On 13 March 1940 the Canons of Canterbury Cathedral publicly denounced their Dean in a collective letter to *The Times*:

> In order to correct any misunderstanding, we feel compelled to make it known that we, the Canons Residentiary of Canterbury Cathedral, dissociate ourselves from the political utterances of the Dean of Canterbury which, as reported in the public press, have so often given the impression that he condones the offences of Russia against humanity and religion. We have further thought it our duty to tell him that his political activities gravely impair the spiritual influence of the Cathedral in the City and Diocese of Canterbury, give grievous offence to many Christians throughout the world and, in our view, are proving themselves to be incompatible with the proper discharge of the trust which has been committed to him. We desire to make it known that we are at one with the Dean in believing that it is the duty of all Christians to further social and economic reform, but we believe it to be a dangerous illusion to hold that such reform will ever be achieved by the methods which have characterised the Soviet regime.

Johnson's reply, in *The Times,* 16th March 1940, categorically denied that he had 'condoned the offences of Russia against humanity and religion' or that he had advocated changes in Britain 'by the methods which have characterised the Soviet regime.' Butler comments that: 'He adduced no new evidence, merely pointing to his considerable corpus of published work, particularly *The Socialist Sixth of the World*.'

There were to be several other conflicts with ecclesiastical authorities but neither Archbishop nor Chapter could legally remove Johnson from the Deanship. The Cathedral's own legal Constitution meant that only a conviction for immorality or proof of dereliction of duty could dislodge him. And, as Johnson had pointed out to Archbishop Lang, he had preached twenty-three sermons in the Cathedral in 1939 and had faithfully observed his obligation to worship at least once a day in the Cathedral whenever he was in Canterbury. Of the thirty-nine meetings of the Chapter in 1939 he had missed only one.

The Canons might perhaps have preferred him to have missed rather more and to have given fewer sermons. Canon Crum asserted to the *Daily Telegraph* that: 'We have done the most serious act we can think of to show that we consider the Dean is not the right man for his job'. They had, it seems, done all they could to rid themselves of this troublesome Dean,

short of another murder in the Cathedral. But what was at stake in defining 'the right man for his job' was a variation upon the question, indicated by Eadmer in the case of Anselm, of what constituted not only fitness for high ecclesiastical office but what high ecclesiastical office was fit for. Johnson's Madison Square Garden speech may have invoked Becket 'who died for liberty' but his critique of his own position more closely echoed Anselm's structural dilemma. In the final sermon in *Christians and Communism*, entitled 'Conscience and Freedom', Johnson stated (p. 141):

> My conscience, for one, never is and never has been at ease in this society. All income which comes to me directly or indirectly is tainted by it. Nor can I escape the responsibility by giving my money away in charity. I am still responsible for the society in which profit making and private ownership is the ruling principle.

accusations

We can however probe a little further. The persistent accusation against Johnson was not simply that he preached a form of Christian Socialism but that he was blind to the horrors of Stalinism. After all, that collection of sermons, *Christians and Communism*, was published in 1956, the year in which Stalin's crimes were finally officially acknowledged even within the Soviet Union itself, at the 20th Party Congress. It was also the year in which the Budapest rising was put down by Soviet tanks, though – as Johnson would surely have pointed out – it was also the year of the Anglo-French-Israeli military attack upon Nasser's restrained Egyptian version of anti-imperialist socialism.

Simply to adduce his writings about the Soviet Union was not, in the eyes of his critics, an adequate defence, even if he made it clear (with a barbed twist) that he was not advocating the Soviet model for England:

> We may perhaps notice in passing that should the socialist experiment otherwise approve itself, say in England or America, it by no means follows that the method of expropriation pursued by the Soviets need be followed here. Not that expropriation, if made in the interests of the community as a whole, need be immoral. Tithe was recently expropriated from the clergy of the Church of England, and Canterbury suffered heavily. Yet Canterbury welcomed that expropriation as in the larger public interests. Expropriation, however, is not always necessary, nor always wise.
>
> (*Socialist Sixth*, p. 113**)**

He had the tact not to mention that he was the Dean of what had once been a Benedictine monastery, forcibly expropriated by state power.

Nevertheless, Johnson was clearly and consistently in favour of a certain basic conception of what he saw as the Soviet model:

> The Russian programme gripped me from its earliest formulation. Majestic in range, practical in detail, scientific in form, Christian in spirit, it has embarked on a task never yet attempted by modern or ancient State. It is a programme which thinks, not in terms of a privileged class, but in terms of each individual soul; not in terms of profit for the few, but in terms of service for all; deliberately bent on organizing the whole of life over a sixth of the earth's surface, so that a twelfth of the world's population may eventually share, each according to his need. (*SS*, p. 88)

What consistently enthused Johnson, who had been initially trained as an engineer, was the notion of a scientific plan. Yet, crucially, Johnson attributes to Lenin not so much an actual plan as only the politically persuasive appearance of one:

> the workers needed the stimulus of a great vision and a great programme, and the genius of Lenin, perceiving this, provided the suggestion which developed at length into the Five-Year Plans. Lenin's suggestion is contained in an interesting letter written to Krzhizhanovsky in 1920.
> 'Couldn't you', he wrote, 'produce a plan (not a technical but a political scheme) which would be understood by the proletariat? For instance, in 10 years (or 5?) we shall build 20 (or 30 or 50?) power stations covering the country with a network of such stations, each with a radius of operation of say 400 versts (or 200 if we are unable to achieve more) . . We need such a plan at once to give the masses a shining unimpeded prospect to work for: and in 10 (or 20?) years we shall electrify Russia, the whole of it, both industrial and agricultural.'

Johnson then comments:

> Lenin knew the long and pinching years which lay before the Russian workers, and the need for hope in the future to tide them over the stringencies of the present. Gauging the situation with uncanny accuracy, he laid soundly the plans that now mature. Through those early years Russia endured because she lived in the future. The glorious life-to-be would compensate her for the drab life-that-was. A new political system, a new freedom, a new emancipation for the individual, a new and speeded industrialism, and a new distribution of the produces of industry on a more equitable basis, all these were fruits to be reaped in the future: and to accomplish these ends, and to overcome illiteracy and industrial inefficiency and the terrible economic losses to

which they daily lead, the assets were the zeal of the leaders, the stolid patience of the people, and the stimulus of this magnificent plan. (*SS*, p. 113)

Johnson explicitly registered that at the core of the Soviet programme was not so much the application of science to social and economic problems as a *belief* in the possibility of such scientific planning. And it was that belief, rather than any actuality, which most fundamentally attracted Johnson's allegiance. He writes in *The Socialist Sixth of the World*:

> An earlier section pictured the achievements of science and scientific industry, with its immediate promise of abundant life for all. Place beside that picture the facts of present and avoidable poverty in England, and say where justice lies. With milk restricted and herrings flung back into the sea, millions of British children are undersized and underfed, one-sixth of the whole child population disastrously so. This is no wild statement or rough guess, it is based on cold calculations.
>
> Sir John Boyd-Orr, for example, one of Britain's most distinguished dietetic experts, in his recent book on *Food, Health, and Income*, calculates that half our population is inadequately fed. Estimating ten shillings per head per week as essential for a completely adequate diet, he observes that only half our population can afford that sum. He classifies the population of Britain as follows:
>
> 4,500,000 spending 4s. a week on food.
> 9,000,000 spending 6s. a week on food.
> 9,000,000 spending 8s. a week on food.
> 9,006,000 spending 10s. a week on food.
> 9,000,000 spending 12s. a week on food.
> 4,500,000 spending over 14s. a week on food.
>
> The class spending under 4s. per person a week on food contains one-sixth of all British children. Where is justice there ?

Those damning statistics for the UK may indeed be 'the facts' but they are introduced by the rather curious formulation (my emphasis): 'An earlier section *pictured* the achievements of science and scientific industry, with its *immediate promise* of abundant life for all. Place beside *that picture* the facts of present and avoidable poverty in England, and say where justice lies.' The facts of the capitalist situation are actually being contrasted not with alternative facts but with a picture of a promise. A version of double displacement.

Consider how 'the scientist' is enthusiastically depicted here:

> What an asset the scientist is when we dare to utilize him, and utilize the wealth that even one man can make possible. Sir Robert Hadfield read a paper in 1932 before the Oil Industries Club, and claimed that economies to the value of £500,000,000 had resulted from the use of only two of the many steels he had invented. The savings due to Edison's work have been estimated at £3,000,000,000. Fifty men, in the Kimberley mine in California, by the use of automatic appliances, load 5,000 tons of lead ore a day – one-eighth of the world's total output. The boot factories in Northamptonshire can, in a few month's work, turn out all the boots actually used in this country in a year. The tractor drawing the combined harvester and thresher have increased the output of the wheatfield worker some seventy-fold. For the first time in history it has enabled crop-farming to be carried on without seasonal demands on labour. The wheatlands of Canada have been extended hundreds of miles farther north by the work of Cambridge botanists, whilst Sir Daniel Hall, Advisor to the Board of Agriculture, tells us that the possible productivity of our own English soil has been doubled by the scientific work of the last ten years. The genetic study of the sugar-cane by Dutch investigators introduced new canes which have raised the yield of sugar in Java by 15 tons per hectare, as compared with a world average of only 3-5 tons. Chemistry and biology are working miracles as well as physics, and Professor J. B. S. Haldane sees the day approaching when with cellulose-splitting enzymes we shall convert wood pulp into palatable food. We live but on the fringe of possibility. (*SS*, p. 54)

When examined in detail this compelling wave of assertions largely resolves into a conflation of claimed actual successes with merely extrapolated possibilities. Compare this account of rising productivity:

> Within the last two centuries, power development has increased with incredible rapidity. In 1712 a steam engine was invented which developed 56 man-power. In 1772 a single engine produced 765 man-power. By 1871 it had grown to 20,000 man-power. By the 1890's a single reciprocating engine produced 234,000 times the work of one man. Our twentieth century has even greater things to show, and now we have a turbine unit, working on a twenty-four-hour basis, producing 9,000,000 manpower . . there is no conceivable limit to the utilization of solar power for productive purposes. (*SS* p. 52**)**

That last sentence was written in 1939. It might still be prophetically true and realisable today. But one can also recall at this point Walter Benjamin's remarks about the dangers of a belief in inevitable progress.

Part of the issue I am exploring is the very mode in which Johnson supports his position and the kind of evidence he presents. We might readily accept an argument in the abstract, when he writes, for example:

> Political equality demands economic equality. . . We lack it. Our democracy, valuable though it is and a thing to fight for – has not the struggle for it helped us to appreciate and hold dear many things like honesty, truth, and mercy which we rightly cherish like life itself? – will never reach its fruition till we follow the Soviet lead and secure for all economic liberty and equality. It will shrink rather than grow as economic inequality increases. The vast fortunes, which enable wealthy individuals to gain so large a measure of control of the Press, already and subtly undermine much of our imagined and vaunted democratic liberty.

But by 1939 it should have been impossible simply to concur with the second sentence in the passage, one which I omitted: 'The Soviet Union has it.' Both political equality and economic equality? Johnson continues with the claim:

> The Soviets have laid firm foundations. A new spirit breathes into the lives of millions who yesterday were downtrodden and oppressed, and shows itself in their new forms of government. . . True democrats must rejoice in so mighty a victory for the progressive spirit of mankind.
>
> Many hindrances cause the failure of a more general democratic welcome to the new Constitution and all it stands for. The chief of these is ignorance, and ignorance in many quarters deliberately fostered. The spread of true knowledge of what has happened and is happening would destroy the picture of Stalin as an oriental despot. And that picture has been created and is fostered in this country for reasons we can readily understand.
>
> Stalin is no oriental despot. His new Constitution shows it. His readiness to relinquish power shows it. His refusal to add to the power he already possesses shows it. His willingness to lead his people down new and unfamiliar paths of democracy shows it. The easier course would have been to add to his own power and develop autocratic rule. His genius is revealed in the short, simple sentences which enshrine the Basic Law of the U.S.S.R., where in clear, clean language stands the charter of the new rights of man in the Socialist Society.
>
> Here is a document which ranks amongst the greatest in all human documents in its love of humanity and its reverence for human dignity. To read this astonishing document, to compare it with its predecessors, to trace the growth and blossoming and fruitage of what began years

> ago as a young and very tender plant, gives fresh encouragement to every democrat in every land, and incites him afresh to struggle against every opposition, and in face, if need be, of the most brutal oppression, for that new and richer freedom that all the world's great minds have looked for and longed for.

To appeal, however rousingly, to a legal Constitution as evidence of an actually existing 'new and richer freedom' is almost as abstract a gesture as arguing for a consonance between Christianity and communism based solely upon juxtaposing biblical verses with quotations from Karl Marx.

stats

What has all this to do with thinking about the nature of 'history'? Consider that many thousands or possibly even millions of readers may have regarded Hewlett Johnson's *The Socialist Sixth of the World* as more persuasive than the strident capitalist critiques made incessantly of the Soviet Union. This was partly due to the particular way in which Johnson presents his case. He offers a highly persuasive combination of eye-witness personal experiences and floods of impersonal statistics. The autobiographical component of his account may well come across as a wholly sincere recounting of direct knowledge, even if the reliance upon Soviet official statistical data, usually without detailed citation of specific sources, laid Johnson open to the often-repeated charge of innocent naivete.

Read the following typical example from the seventh sermon in *Christians and Communism*, with its repeated appeal to personal witnessing:

> … we see a people closely knit, increasingly prosperous and advancing in individual culture beyond belief, able to give, from their own resources, free medical attention to all, free education to all up to seventeen years of age (this is to be completed by 1960); able to found their own Academies of Science, Academies of Medicine and Musical Academies; able also to run their own universities. I have seen these things with my own eyes in Armenia, Georgia, Uzbekistan, Tajikistan, Kazakstan, as well as in the Ukraine and Russia proper and in Siberia.
>
> I have seen and studied all this over a long period of years. To note but a few points: In Tashkent I re-visited in 1954 a cotton factory, one of the biggest in the world, its size doubled since my first visit in 1945 and now turning out each day of the year cloth thirty-nine inches wide which would stretch from the North Sea, across the whole of England, to the Irish Sea.
>
> In the same town, Tashkent, my wife and I examined a special school for musical children, five hundred of them with ninety-eight teachers. The classes are small and concentrate not only on traditional but also on modern music. The school with its curriculum modelled on the

ordinary high school standard, carries its pupils till eighteen or nineteen years of age. It is all free. So is the hostel free for children living in places too far for the daily journey. Where in Kenya or Malaya or British Guiana will you find any such school?

Surely here, in this treatment of racialism, is another outstanding point of contact with the Jesus of the Gospels, who died to produce just such a thing as this. Where for example in [the still imperial colonies] South Africa or West Africa or Central Africa with populations far exceeding those of central Asia will you see, as in small Tajikistan, its own native Academy of Science with nineteen Doctors and ninety Masters of Science on the staff? Tajikistan with barely one quarter of the population of Kenya boasts now five thousand doctors and fifty-eight newspapers in the vernacular. The whole west coast of Africa with twenty-six millions has no free vernacular newspaper written by the Africans, for the Africans; and barely two dozen libraries in all, whilst in the whole of Soviet Asia, with seventeen millions of population there are 7,407 libraries.

Turn to Georgia, a country hardly bigger than Wales and with a less population. In the physics laboratories of the University of Tbilisi the capital, which I have also visited, there are more science students than the whole of London University, and five times as many girl students, and they take a five, not a three years course.

Weigh this statement carefully. Remember that Georgia is only one of sixteen republics and you can judge the truth of Admiral Strauss's warning - Strauss is the Chairman of the Atomic Energy Commission - in The Times on October 8th, 1955, as to Russia's lead in training scientists and engineers, which from America's point of view would become a national calamity.

What, after all, do '*we see*'? It is perhaps grimly ironic that the biblical verse for this sermon is from Luke, 4.25: 'There were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah… when the great famine came…'

Sometimes a generalised or commonsensical statement of desirable aims can segue into a kind of objectively statistical confirmation of their fulfilment, as in Johnson's 1943 pamphlet entitled *Marxism and the Individual*:

Let us now return to the primary object for which material goods are produced – the intelligent promotion of human life.

Certain commodities and appliances are essential to the full development of life; protection from foes, a healthy body, a generous education, cultural facilities. . . The provision of these is a primary charge on that wealth of the community in which each individual shares but which none can spend as he chooses. Each can earn a wage and spend that exactly as he likes. Each also shares in the annual corporate

dividend of industry. That dividend is spent for him and spent as, how, and when the majority of which he forms a part decides.

A small digression will explain this point. The Soviet Union builds up its own capital machinery, which forms its capital investment. This investment is constantly increasing: its rate of increase constantly accelerating. During the First Five-Year Plan it increased at an average rate of 12,000 million roubles a year. The total investment at the end of the third year of the Third Five-Year Plan was 860,000 million rubles or £34,000,000,000. All this investment belongs to the people: it represents community capital in which every man, woman and child had, in 1937, a share of £170 and which was rising rapidly every year. The annual dividend from this share represents a sum of some £60 per annum per person. That dividend is received in addition to the wages earned. It is paid out, not in cash but in various social services; in re-investment in fresh capital machinery; in armaments; in free education; in free health services; in cultural amenities – in the interests, that is, of human life, wisely planned as the result of the pooled wisdom of the people through their representatives. That income gives the material basis of the Soviet citizen's rights. (p. 16)

Sometimes the asserted statistics simply overwhelm, as a few pages later:

Soviet education is remarkable for its range. Russia's education in 1919 lagged far behind other nations with 10 to 15 per cent literates against Britain's 100 per cent. Today 18.4 per cent of Russia's population attend elementary and secondary schools as against England's 14.5 per cent; while 3.5 per thousand are receiving a university education as against our 1.3 per thousand, with vast programmes, yet projected.

By 1940 Russia was spending £7-2s. per head on education against our £2. Nor does even that exhaust the contrast. For vast numbers among the 193 millions of the Soviet Union are back-ward: not less but more is spent on these. The Soviets spend £39 per annum on the Turkmen child living on the northern slopes of the Himalaya mountains: Britain spends 1s 6d on the Hindu child. The Soviets spend £5 10s. on the Turkmen child's health services: Britain spends 1d. on the Hindu child.

And then comes the irrefutable personalised affirmation:

'It is easy', says Ilya Ehrenburg, 'to bring up ten thousand of the select at the expense of the rest, to create an enlightened aristocracy set off against the ignorance of millions. We are seeking something quite different: enlightenment for all, and the all includes all nationalities. (p. 18)

The appealing authenticity of the personal eyewitness ('we see') may well distract us from registering obvious *caveats* concerning the reliability of disputed statistics, or the lack of citation of credible sources. After all, we know that Hewlett Johnson did not speak Russian, and he might quite sincerely be transmitting the deliberately false claims of his guides, or accepting well-intentioned but manipulated economic estimates by those responsible for results, or simply systemic miscalculations due to inadequate administrative procedures. To many of his critics, of course, the entire picture that Johnson presented of the Soviet Union was a deliberately distorted and utter misrepresentation of 'the facts'. Or, to use a term deployed by a recent White House spokesperson: 'alternative facts.'

plans

The issue that intrigues me concerns not simply a question of Johnson's sincerity (again, recall Anselm) or a matter of historical accuracy. Or even the echo of Foxe's deployment of intense personal witnessing alongside chapter-and-verse citations from *Revelations,* as compared with Hewlett Johnson's passionate testimonies combined with Soviet statistics.

Rather, the issue of historical anonymity returns in a new mode. How, after all, is any society to be assessed in terms of the overall well-being of *all* its inhabitants? It may indeed be possible to give an eyewitness account of some local instances of happiness or success, however one might understand such terms, but what is the view-point from which one could begin to assess an entire nation, let alone one-sixth of the world? Indeed, how is any social formation to arrive in practice at the realisation of any such shared prosperity, or even an evaluation of it? Is the implementation of some sort of 'plan' unavoidable? But then how do we judge the plan?

There are several entwined questions. One is whether any 'plan', however ostensibly scientific in character, can be anything other than a mainly statistical projection. Another, perhaps even more intractable, is whether we can have any conception of a society as made up of individuals when the sheer number of those involved seems graspable only in the form of numerical statistics. One aspect of these issues was raised much earlier in relation to the practice of the Anonymous Chronicler in recording the deaths of ordinary soldiers as anonymous numbers. Two other but related contexts can be considered.

Among one of the many significant experiences in what was by any standards an extraordinary life, Hewlett Johnson was among the very first British observers to visit, in late May 1945, the concentration camp at Auschwitz, liberated by Soviet troops four months previously. Butler (p.153) quotes Johnson's account of the experience, published in *Soviet Success* in 1947:

> On a strip of malarial land, in a camp designed for 50,000 or 60,000 persons, and always crammed to capacity, 4,000,000 human beings were done to death with German thoroughness, caught in a net from which few ever escaped . . The cells will always haunt me to my dying day. Inscriptions abound, scratched with human nails on whitewashed walls: 'Nothing to smoke; nothing to eat. It is dark. We sit here twenty-three days.' . . In one cell whose only window was a hole 4½ inches square through a thick wall and which measured 12 feet by 7 feet and was 8 feet high, an immense number were shut in with no sanitation at all. . . Those condemned to die . . were pushed into a room the size of a narrow tennis court, packed tight with hundreds of victims; savage dogs set at their naked bodies to squeeze the mass still further in; then to the sound of terrifying cries and screams, doors slammed, gas was injected, and in 20 minutes merciful death came.

The now appallingly familiar description of gas chamber atrocities continues. We might recall the Polish poems quoted earlier.

A second context: for many years Hewlett Johnson hung over the entrance to the Deanery in the cathedral precincts a prominent banner proclaiming that Christians must oppose nuclear weapons, and he spoke regularly at 'Ban The Bomb' rallies in the 1950s. One unresolved mystery concerning his life is that on 12th July 1945, on a visit to the Soviet Union, he was summoned to a long and private interview with Joseph Stalin himself, an almost unprecedented invitation. Four days later, the USA successfully tested an atomic bomb, and on 6th August 1945 the USA obliterated Hiroshima. The following year, on a visit to America, Johnson was invited to a personal interview with President Truman at the White House. The suspicion has sometimes been voiced that Johnson had acted as an intermediary, with the acquisition and use of nuclear weapons as the subject of a direct message, whatever that communication may have been.

If there had once been in traditional warfare a distinction drawn not only between the named officers and the innumerable 'other ranks' but also between military personnel and non-combatants, Hitler's concentration camps and America's use of the atomic bomb on Hiroshima and Nagazaki, as well as the extensive carpet-bombing by and against all state combatants, had shown that all of us were now potentially anonymised zeroes in an almost unimaginable statistic.

In a further perspective, both the brutal implementation of a 'scientific' economic plan and the callously indifferent effects of deliberate and ongoing globalised financial manipulations can be regarded as inter-connected facets of a reciprocally determined historical development. Any attempted comparative evaluation of the past 'achievements' of imperial capitalism and of Soviet-style communism would quickly take us into the realm of competing polemical versions, directly concerning both 'which' and 'what' happened. The binary historiography of the ongoing Cold War

has been as blatantly propagandist as competing Catholic and Protestant popular accounts of the Reformation. And increasingly in our era the role of statistics has been crucial not only in propagandist presentation but in the actual organisation and conceptualisation of social and economic models.

So what kind of 'contemporary history' was Johnson writing? Clearly, in his version of a *historia novorum*, his depiction of actual or potential '*mutationes*', and of sweeping reciprocal change, Johnson was a propagandist who had persuaded himself to see in the Soviet programme the realisation of what he wanted to believe was an inevitable direction of progress. His mode of persuading others to believe in the Soviet Union might be regarded as an attempt to persuade himself that what he *knew* could only be realised in the future, if at all, had already arrived.

In a fairly strict sense, then, what Hewlett Johnson spent his life prolifically composing was essentially a Utopia, in that he was depicting a country which was truly fantastic but which he claimed to have personally visited, as a rare traveller from the excluded outside world, and about which he was able to inform his readers in suitably impressive detail. The familiar motif or device of the Explorer travelling on a journey and finding the remote island or undiscovered land of Utopia is paralleled by the Red Dean's constant travels to the 'inaccessible' territories behind the 'Iron Curtain' and his returning to vividly recount his personal experiences of particular factories and agricultural communes, specific villages and individuals, and to expound the alien but impressive principles and practices of this wondrous new world.

This is not necessarily to accuse him of a systematic deception, or even of self-deception, but rather to recognise that the literary mode in which he composed his work was constructed and offered *as if* it were contemporary reportage of actual historical developments which he had witnessed at first hand.

In other words, the literary genre he was actually following was that invented on the very brink of the English Reformation by Saint Sir Thomas More in 1516 – whose martyred skull, incidentally, is entombed in the church of St Dunstan in Canterbury. But then, we might ask, what is the relationship between history and utopia?

faith

Perhaps over-influenced by extended reading of Hewlett Johnson's writings I am tempted to move from merely considering towards sermonising. That is, after all, the price you might expect to pay for entering a cathedral. To the end of his life, Hewlett Johnson's personal Christian faith seems to have been intact and unquenchable, even if some might have considered it idiosyncratic or heretical. He seems to have retained some version of a

belief in a personal after-life, but his affirmation of the 'kingdom of God' as a future community of peace and justice on earth was at least as strong.

When sorting the archive collection a librarian reported that:

> Amongst a bundle of letters dating from 1960 – 1965, a half-sheet of writing paper appeared, a short letter written on August 30th 1907, by the young Reverend Hewlett Johnson to his sister Rose. He wrote about the contrasting cultures of China and Japan, and then: 'I have for years been a full blown evolutionist. Now I am a full blown socialist. I never realised before how extraordinarily and beautifully the teaching of Christ is socialistic. His teaching of the Kingdom of Heaven, which He declares may be and is to be on earth, as well as in heaven, is thoroughly socialistic and quite opposed to our fierce and cruel competitive system as we see it at the present'.

From his very early days as the editor of *The Interpreter* Johnson knew that throughout the complex development of the New Testament the earliest Christians had believed in the imminent arrival of the Kingdom on earth, and that it was in the postponement of any such immediate eschatological realisation that the notion of a heavenly community took shape, with the emphasis increasingly upon the possibility of each individual's after-life survival rather than upon a communal salvation or even general resurrection at Christ's Second Coming. From one perspective, Johnson was rediscovering a faith and hope in a new earth, a new creation, even if somewhat against the grain of what had become the dominant version of Christian belief. As with the sixteenth- century Reformers, Johnson was seeking to realise a version of 'primitive' Christianity which his own biblical inquiries had constructed.

A belief in an individual after-life in heaven or hell can be a powerful motivation, though perhaps more (according to Johnson) to say one's prayers and to attend church services rather than to be actively involved in feeding the poor or fighting against injustice. Even if the 'after-life', 'purgatory', the 'final judgement', 'heaven and hell', all remained uncritically fuzzy or fiercely contested concepts, that did not preclude them from playing an important motivational role in human behaviour. And if the after-life, as anticipated in so many memorial inscriptions, were indeed to have no existence except in a fictive world of theological imagination and argument, belief in such a post- historical life has nevertheless profoundly shaped what has happened in history.

Clearly, too, a belief in a national past of victories or of oppressions, however legendary, mythical, or ideologically constructed, has motivated entire groups of people to go to war and to die in combat for defensively patriotic, aggressively imperialist, defiantly anti-colonial reasons, and so on. Arguably, all histories and past events have exercised effectivity not as the actual material traces or direct evidences which have physically survived but

primarily as the songs, legends, tales, stories, narratives, interpretations, which are woven and re-woven out of those traces and around those evidences. Our current tellings and imaginings of the past may also be quite substantially shaped not only by those who no longer exist but by those who never did, whether King Arthur or those fictive pilgrims who told tales *en route* to a Canterbury they never actually visited. And some fictive evidences, whether Canterbury's forged charters or manipulated Soviet statistics, may survive critical scrutiny even longer than we will ever know.

A belief in what has not yet happened may operate in a somewhat similar way, even if that future is never to occur. Believing in the after-life of an individual or the possibility of a heaven may be closely akin to believing in the possibility of a transformed world, even if that belief takes the form only of an imagined utopia, or more soberly of a planet salvaged from impending climate ruin. The Red Dean's account of the Soviet Union was not merely misleading hyperbole or sincerely mistaken fantasy, but perhaps more a kind of extra-ordinarily detailed utopian imagining, conflating the planned future with the present and the hopefully possible with the alleged actual.

Obviously, what most constantly changes in 'history' is the unknowness of the future. What is future is always an effect of the specific horizon of the current time. What was once the future may now be the past for me, but I will certainly not know the same future as the next generation will. It is not so much that I and my contemporaries will have vanished into a black hole of the past, but that the dead disappear from the future, cannot actively contribute to any future changes except by what was already done by them in what will one day have become their past. Unless, of course, like Becket we can perform posthumous miracles. Both the past and any particular future are always made up of those people who have vanished with the ending of their own life-times. Lenin never saw the worst of Stalin. Or 1989.

On some versions of history, however, the future is deemed to be almost as knowable as the past. This can take the form of a proud claim that God is on 'our' side or as the defiant cry that 'we' will, one day, overcome. The belief that God's Providence (both fore-sight and over-sight) and his intervention into 'history' through the promise of the covenant, the incarnation, and a final judgement, finds a complex descendant not only in a belief in individual predestination but in the secular notion that history has a direction or meaning, that the overall shape of history is intelligible at least in principle. Which is one basis upon which Hewlett Johnson could try to syncretise a Christian with a Marxist perspective. The directing fore-knowledge of a God may modulate into a defiant cry from a revolutionary on trial that "history will vindicate us", but it can also become a grim problematic, as for Koestler's protagonist in the fictional double-blind of his *Darkness at Noon*.

The notion that history somehow follows a rational path, that it is reason rather than the Divine which operates in history, is a version of the belief in linear progress often attributed to Marx but which one of his finest commentators rejected. Walter Benjamin's Thesis XIII might as well refer to the Red Dean of Canterbury:

> Social Democratic theory, and even more its practice, has been shaped by a conception of progress that does not adhere to reality but imposes dogmatic claims on the present. The image of progress in the minds of Social Democrats was, first, the progress of humanity itself (and not just advances in human abilities and knowledge). Secondly, it was seen as boundless, in keeping with the infinite perfectibility of mankind. Thirdly, progress was regarded as irresistible, inherently following a straight or spiral course. Each of these predicates is controversial and subject to criticism. However, ultimately, criticism must go beyond these predicates and focus on what they share in common. The concept of historical progress cannot be sundered from the concept of its passage through homogenous, empty time. A critique of the concept of such progression must form the basis of any critique of the concept of progress itself.

We have returned to familiar territory. Benjamin's Thesis VII also refused the adage that one should write history by forgetting everything you know about what has happened subsequent to the period you are writing about.

> To historians who wish to relive an era, Fustel de Coulanges recommends that they blot out everything they know about the later course of history. There is no better way of characterizing the method with which historical materialism has broken.

Yet if a post-god belief in inevitable progress or in rational teleology is to be regarded as unjustified, does this preclude any belief in an overall intelligibility of 'history' and perhaps therefore any firm hope that rational intervention by human beings can itself help to shape a future? And even if localised policy interventions are plausibly progressive, is any attempt at giving direction to a total global history as essentially unpredictable as attempting control over a world economy by statistics and algorithms? This may not be only a matter of erratically irrational actions or an invincible lack of intelligibility, but also a consequence of the perhaps only apparently chaotic character of 'natural history', not least at the level of droughts, earthquakes, cyclones, pandemics, and impending climate change.

Walter Benjamin's most famous Thesis is number IX:

> There is a painting by Klee called Angelus Novus. It depicts an angel that appears as though it were being pulled away from something that

transfixes it. Its eyes are wide open, its mouth agape, and wings outstretched. The angel of history must look like this. Its face is turned toward the past. Where a chain of events appears before us, it sees a single catastrophe that piles ruin upon ruin and hurls them at its feet. The angel longs to stay, wake the dead, and piece together what has been shattered. But a storm blows from paradise, catching in its wings with such force that the angel can no longer close them. This storm drives the angel irresistibly into the future, to which its back is turned, while the pile of ruins before it grows toward the sky. What we call progress is *this* storm.

Hewlett Johnson concluded the 1941 American edition of his book *Soviet Strength* with what was in effect a plea to neutral America to join the fight against Nazism:

> I write this on the fifth day of the Nazi attack on the Soviet Union. I write to reaffirm my faith in that great land and in the principles and forces which I have tried to describe in this book. If what I then said is true, as I believe it to be, then no matter what vicissitudes the immediate future holds in store the final victory can never be in doubt. . . I write this in the wrecked remains of my ancient and beautiful Deanery, dive-bombed last October whilst we sat at lunch. There was not then, nor is there now, any anger nor bitterness in my heart. Only a profound pity for the pain and folly of this world, and the firm knowledge that difficult and stern tasks must be accomplished in order that the enslaved workers and people of Europe may be set free. Our great and lovely Cathedral stands ringed about with the havoc caused by bombs. Gaunt and ugly gaps mar the former beauty of our peaceful precincts and of the ancient city streets.
>
> Yet the Cathedral rises above it all calm and unharmed, the beautiful Bell Harry Tower reaching unscathed towards the skies. Here I see a symbol of the infinite spirit of mankind, and of the inscrutable, ultimate and beneficent purposes of God.
>
> HEWLETT JOHNSON,
> The Deanery, Canterbury
> June 30th 1941

A year later, on the night of 31 May 1942, there was a more devastating bombing raid on Canterbury. Johnson wrote in a letter to his wife Nowell (in HJ Archive):

> Canterbury looks appalling. I think no town has suffered more for its size: 400 shops and business premises and houses quite gone: 1500 more badly damaged: the Cathedral library terribly smashed: MacNutt's house [in the precincts] consumed, Shirley's a wreck and Sargent's too.

> From Maltby's and the cattle market to Mercery Lane gone, and the same in other great areas. Jerry let us have it with a vengeance. The loss of life amazingly small, only some 20 as far as is at present known. And only 47 badly wounded cases. We all escaped, running in socks and under-clothes to the crypt.

And then:

> The Cathedral stands in a wilderness of desolation … The Cathedral itself, though all the windows are blown out, stands up grand and unhurt, save for honourable scars here and there. The sun pours in everywhere; all the dark gloom has left the chancel and Mrs Fergusson's flowers give a triumphant blaze of colour. The whole thing is prophetic of the future to me.

The raid on the Cathedral was also an echo of the past. It was almost exactly three hundred years since the visit of Colonel Sandys' destructive troopers. Much of the Burgate street was reduced to rubble by the air raid but the refurbished Christ Church Gate from 1935, before which the Archbishop had once made his plea that developments in the Burgate would not mar the beauty of it, survived – reasonably intact.

At the 1935 Canterbury Festival, for which the energetic Dean Johnson had been partly responsible, T. S. Eliot's reworking of Becket's death as *Murder in the Cathedral* was performed. Memorably, Eliot's Becket is most nearly seduced by the temptation to do 'the right deed for the wrong reason'. Hewlett Johnson may in the eyes of many have been seduced into the wrong deeds for the right reason. The fundamental comparison may not, however, be with Becket but again with the structural impasses which confronted St Anselm.

Hewlett Johnson did not, for whatever reasons, apparently qualify for a memorial in the nave, let alone a splendid tomb next to King Henry VI or the Black Prince.

But there is a small commemorative tablet embedded in the cloister garth, the lawn in the centre of the cloisters, once a quiet garden for the monks at work and prayer in this cathedral and its precincts.

Of course, long before Sir Thomas More composed his version of a *Utopia*, another garden, even a paradise, had sometimes been regarded as initiating the long tale of human history. Paradise Lost. It is time to look back further.

*

ADAM

When we reach the end of the nave we have a number of options: go up the steps and through the doorway into the choir; follow the pilgrim route along the North aisle; step down into what is now called the Martyrdom, the spot where Becket was killed.

In fact, many visitors at this point turn to look back along the length of the nave behind them, and to gaze again at the great stained-glass West Window, now fully visible in all its splendour. We can pause with them. Such is the impact that the pause might be a fairly long one.

The eye is soon drawn to what seems to be the focus of the whole composition, the wonderful image of Adam in the lowest line of figures. Flanking him on either side are other figures of impressive design and quality, each sitting upon a throne and with a partly decipherable name inscribed. Above is a range of several figures with an imposing King occupying the centre panel, and further above is another row of more than life-size regal images with their crowns and robes, and then another three rows of much smaller figures, some sixty or so saints. All these are splendid in their dignity and majesty, with their poised and hieratic gestures and their vividly coloured draperies.

Adam – the name is easily legible on his panel – stands out as the only figure who is engaged in strenuous physical activity. He is digging with a spade into stony ground, his muscles straining with the effort. His bearded face has a look of sober sadness. And he is almost naked, with only a fleece tied around his waist. A tree grows out of the ground behind him and from one of its branches a mediaeval hoe is hanging. It is easy to be captivated by the overall impact of this huge window and in particular by the powerful but poignant depiction of Adam himself.

Yet if we then ask what this striking image of Adam is a picture *of,* we might hesitate. The various figures of kings and saints in the rest of the window might, we vaguely suppose, be loosely based upon some actual historical persons and may even, in some sense, be regarded as possibly looking like the people they represent. But what, after all, did Adam look like? And how could the artist possibly know?

A first reaction might be to say that Adam is here simply presented as any agricultural labourer, from any period, perhaps modelled on a peasant or serf from the artist's own 12th century. Another response would be to regard the image as an illustration of specific verses in *Genesis*, concerning the animal skins with which Adam and Eve clothed themselves, or the injunction to labour 'by the sweat of his brow' which was part of Adam's punishment, while the tree in the background is a reminder of his 'fall' and of the eventual 'tree' of the crucifixion which will recompense for his fall.

Clearly, the artist has not chosen to depict Adam in whatever marvellous state he might once have been before that 'fall' but rather, as the thoughtful facial expression perhaps indicates, a man now confronting mortality. In a sense, one might see this image as primarily another reminder to us of death

itself, even with a suggestion that Adam is digging not simply a field but his own grave.

As with Chichele's *gisant*, the almost naked body of Adam suggests the mortal fate awaiting all those magnificently robed figures in the window above him and, indeed, all those now buried or commemorated in the nave which stretches below this great window. And awaiting ourselves too, even as we gaze upon him.

We might ruminatingly begin to register the multiple themes and resonances which have clustered around the biblical figure of Adam . . But then, perhaps with a sudden jolt, we realise that, of course, if this is supposed to be a *picture* of Adam as 'the first human' it is for most people today quite simply unbelievable, inconceivable. Whatever our vague notions of what the earliest human beings might have looked like, this noble figure with his spade and hoe, his neat beard and sheepskin skirt, his pensive expression and indeed his specified name, does not at all match our current conceptions, even if we admit that they might be somewhat unclear or fuzzy in our own minds. As we adjust the zoom lens to take a photograph of this glorious glass panel we are very unlikely to think that we are taking a photo of what the first human looked like.

genealogy

It's worth trying to unpack some of the half-formed thoughts that can arise from this fairly obvious recognition. For a start, we might register that this panel was designed as the first in a number of what are known as the 'genealogical' windows. There was once a total of perhaps 86 of them, arranged around the high clerestory of the east transepts, the choir, and sanctuary, a sequence of figures stretching from Adam to Christ himself and representing those named in the genealogies recounted in the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, the 'family history' of Jesus. A few of these glass figures are still in their original locations, while others, including the six flanking Adam in the west window, have at various times been relocated from other spaces around the cathedral.

For example, the most recent repair of the enormous window in the south- west transept has left in place an appealing arrangement of the several genealogical figures incorporated into that window, primarily so that they echo each other symmetrically, according to colour and posture, the surrounding ornamentation, and the different panel sizes. This creates an aesthetically admirable overall pattern. But one which deliberately leaves out of account the biblical relationships between the figures: that one 'beget' the next, in an extended family succession. In the original configuration all the panels were designed to follow chronologically in the order given by the evangelists so that this sequence of named figures visually traced the ancestors of Christ back through the generations to Adam himself, depicting his lineal descent.

During the recent restoration of the SW transept window several panels of the genealogical figures were exhibited in the cathedral crypt and elsewhere. For the first time in several hundred years it was possible for a visitor to examine them at ground level and at close range, and to admire the detail of the stunning artistry of the work, especially the extraordinary faces.

The same question, of course, could then arise as with the depiction of Adam himself: in what sense were these representations of the named persons, since it would obviously be hard to claim any visual authenticity for them as portraits. While it was possible to see the ways in which each had been individualised, particularly in relation to the objects they carried, it was also obvious that the primary purpose of the genealogical images was theological: they were not at all designed to provide what we might regard as historically authentic portraits from the family tree. If we reconstruct the entire original series of window panels the sequence is not in fact coherently chronological anyway, since it combines and conflates the two rather different genealogical lists in Matthew and in Luke, neither of which alone would have added up to the total required to match the architectural arrangement of the Cathedral windows. The intention of the original artists was not to provide portraits but a theological lesson which could fit neatly into the spaces available.

One theological point was to emphasise that Christ's genealogy could be traced through the Royal House of David, in accordance with the biblical prophecies concerning the Messiah. This too can raise a question. On one interpretation of the incarnation, Christ was born of a virgin and had no human male parent, yet the genealogy is traced through the male line rather than the female line – though no doubt the more inventive mediaeval commentators managed in various persuasive ways to negotiate this awkward issue.

The more fundamental theological point was the assertion that Christ was indeed fully human since he was, like all mankind, descended from Adam, and the unbroken (if manipulated) genealogical succession visually confirmed this. The image of Adam is presented to us as the first member of the entire human race's shared family tree within which Christ is to be located, as we too now are. That Christ was both fully human and fully divine was central to the dominant orthodox position which had been established in response to several alternative theological tendencies which had denied or affirmed only one of these claims, divinity or humanity, in conflicting opinions declared heretical by various early church councils. We can briefly clarify some of the arguments for this apparently paradoxical or even contradictory claim as to the dual human and divine nature of Christ and the place of Adam within that theological doctrine. As it happens, Anselm of Canterbury provided one of the standard accounts or explanations.

In his treatise entitled *Cur deus homo*, roughly translatable as 'why did God become man?' or 'why a god-man?', which Anselm probably began writing at Canterbury, he regards Adam's act of sinful disobedience as involving an offence against God of such enormity that no human could atone for it and which nevertheless, since it had been committed by a man, could only be put right by a human being. It was therefore logically necessary, according to Anselm's argument, for the intervention of a divine-human Christ, who was capable, as himself divine, of offering the required infinite recompense but was also fully human.

Anselm and other theologians deployed a variety of frameworks in which to try to make sense of the relation between the 'fall' of Adam and the role of the incarnated Christ. Christ's death on the cross could be thought of as the paying of an infinite ransom to redeem humanity from the captivity of the devil, or as the settling of an infinite debt to the Father, or as atoning for the dishonour which Adam's rebellious disobedience had inflicted upon his divine Lord.

Such ways of thinking reflect assumptions which partly derive from a feudal order of obligations, in which the honour of one's *Seigneur* could be outrageously offended almost beyond recompense by a subordinate, or a stupendous and unpayable ransom could be demanded for the release of a lordly hostage taken in war, or as a pledge of behaviour, or an unpaid debt could be the ongoing responsibility of successive generations within a family.

Anselm's notion of 'original sin' included other aspects derived from feudal assumptions, not least that of inherited status and obligation. Adam's personal transgression, however conceived, was a form of disobedience which entailed a loss of rank and property (including dispossession of the garden of paradise) and incurred a penalty (menial work and death) both of which were to be transmitted to his descendants until the transgression was somehow put right.

In so far as we are all descended from Adam, on this view, we all inherit his fallen status, and since his transgression was against the infinite divinity no finite action of our own could itself restore humanity's lost state and estate. In particular, since mortality had been the consequence and punishment of Adam's action, what was necessary was a voluntary acceptance of death itself, entailed in the very act of becoming human but also rendered more effectively sacrificial by the suffering of the crucifixion and death undergone by Christ.

It might be remarked that the Hebrew tradition has very few traces of any such interpretation of the events in Eden. That Jews declined to believe in Saint Paul's notion of a 'second Adam' to be identified with Christ was the underlying rationale offered for the endless and almost hereditary persecution of Jews by Christians and the culmination of that horror in the

Nazi Holocaust. Thus, a theological explanation for the origin of evil was incorporated into an ideological inference which led to one of the most evil of human actions.

death

There were, of course, several variations upon these theological explanations of the relation between the first Adam and Christ as the second Adam. Since the fact of being human involved inheriting the condition of fallenness and death, it could be proposed that it was through the very act of propagation of life itself that the consequences of Adam's sin were transmitted to all humans, and therefore that sexual intercourse, while necessary for the continuation of the human race, was also somehow the way in which every member (in both senses) of that race was inevitably tainted. Though this then necessitated some form of exception being postulated for the sin-less Christ, and while he was born fully human his own conception was nevertheless somehow a-sexual.

Another entangled problem derived from the notion that the pre-fallen Adam had not initially been mortal and that death was a consequence of his transgression. Death, like life itself, was then inevitably inherited by all his descendants. But if Christ had now redeemed our obligations, why do we still have to die? Or, in a variation upon this conundrum, if Christian doctrine was to be interpreted in terms of, or even as compatible with, the philosophical positions derived from Greek thought, both Platonic and Aristotelian, was it the case that the 'immortality' of the 'soul' was originally intrinsic to human nature and that the death of the body had always been a necessary step into immortality? But if so, what was meant by the claim that Christ had conquered death? Or by the doctrine of the resurrection of the body? Indeed, in what sense, after all, had Christ 'saved' us, and from what, and with what effect?

The various mediaeval theological accounts revolved around an allegedly determinate historical event, Adam's fall, and an actual historical incarnation and crucifixion which had somehow acted to overturn the consequences of Adam's fall. Some of the theological positions which became more prominent in the Reformation period tended to make the historicity of Adam less crucial. If the salvation or damnation of any particular individual was in any case pre-destined by a divine decision, it was less clear what contribution either Adam's sinful fall or Christ's sacrificial death could make to the implementation of an already existing eternal pre-decision of individually tailored salvation or damnation.

If, moreover, mankind was intrinsically or endemically evil, our 'state of sin' was an unavoidably ontological rather than a contingently historical condition derived from Adam's actions. If therefore Christ's life was primarily a supreme model for imitation, rather than his death an act of redemption, then his meta-physically dual nature was less theologically

required, and varieties of both Docetism and Arianism could more easily re-emerge, as they indeed did. And if 'justification' was essentially by 'faith', what precisely was the object of that faith? Was it now superfluous to believe in any specific schema of salvation which explained the function of Christ's incarnation and death in relation to the fall of Adam? And so on.

Anselm's treatise *Cur deus homo* had been quite explicitly an attempt to explain and justify the Christian doctrines of incarnation and redemption on a strictly rational basis, without appeal to biblical authority or revelation except as providing an initial quasi-histroical premise.

In chapter 3 of *Cur Deus Homo*, Anselm articulates his basic position:

> For, as death came upon the human race by the disobedience of man, it was fitting that by man's obedience life should be restored. And, as sin, the cause of our condemnation, had its origin from a woman, so ought the author of our righteousness and salvation to be born of a woman. And so also was it proper that the devil, who, being man's tempter, had conquered him in the eating of the tree, should be vanquished by man in the suffering of the tree [the cross] which a man bore. Many other things also, if we carefully examine them, give a certain indescribable beauty to our redemption as thus procured.

His interlocutor in Anselm's text, Boso, responds in chapter 4:

> These things must be admitted to be beautiful, and like so many pictures; but, if they have no solid foundation, they do not appear sufficient to infidels, as reasons why we ought to believe that God wished to suffer the things which we speak of. For when one wishes to make a picture, he selects something substantial to paint it upon, so that his picture may remain. For no one paints on water or in air, because no traces of the picture remain in them. Wherefore, when we hold up to infidels these harmonious proportions which you speak of as so many pictures of the real thing, since they do not think this belief of ours a reality, but only a fiction, they consider us, as it were, to be painting upon a cloud.

Anselm would not himself have seen the great image of Adam now in the West window. Canterbury's surviving stained glass windows came after him. But would he have agreed that a painting of 'Adam' on a window is no more doctrinally persuasive than a painting upon a cloud, a fiction?

frameworks

As we will see much later, Anselm's procedures of intellectual clarification and dialogical argument were to be developed and superseded by the much more systematic construction of rigorously rational or philosophical

investigation, combined with biblical interpretation and exegetical commentary, characteristic of the later mediaeval period, in an attempt to unify within a single methodological approach an integrated articulation of the entire scope of doctrine and practice, as exemplified above all by Thomas Aquinas's comprehensive *Summa Theologiae.*

The subsequent shift of focus among the Reformation theologians inclined more towards a form of doctrinal exploration and exposition based primarily upon elucidating the text of the Bible. This tended however to dissolve any shared systemic framework within which a coherent intellectual agreement might be reached, even among the many distinct reformed tendencies themselves, concerning the multiple possible theological positions on sin and salvation, incarnation and redemption, while at the same time rhetorically reinforcing the authority of the written biblical text, including the accounts in *Genesis* of the creation and of Adam and Eve, and the various tales, laws, and chronicles of ancient Israel.

Yet this very dependence upon the assertion of biblical authority left such modes of theological exposition and argument vulnerable to inquiries into the status and credibility of the biblical text itself. The critical procedures of textual analysis which had emerged in the Renaissance revival of classical scholarship were increasingly applied to the Old Testament and eventually also to the New.

This involved not simply the rectification of errors in manuscript transmission or translation, as in the work of Erasmus, or the disentangling of different and competing strands of composition in the Pentateuch, but a re-thinking of the very nature of the biblical corpus itself and its relation to the 'history' it purported to recount, as in, for example, the work of Richard Simon. As such critical inquiries developed, the account of Adam and Eve might increasingly seem to be no more 'historical' than the genealogical windows were authentic 'family portraits'.

Moreover, by at least the mid-17th century there were questions specifically concerning the historical status of any 'first Adam'. Increasingly, arguments appeared which suggested that there must have been some form of human beings prior to 'Adam', the so-called 'Pre-Adamites'. We might here recall, for example, a speculative account of early human history by the Canterbury headmaster John Twyne in his intriguing *De rebus Albionicis,* published posthumously in 1590. The difficulties of reconciling biblical chronology, however re-calculated, with the emerging indications of much more extended spans of history, together with an uneasy awareness of what the discovery of allegedly 'primitive' humans in the New World and elsewhere might imply for how we might imagine an actual 'Adam', were eventually, of course, to take a decisive turn in the reaction to Darwin's account of evolution.

In particular, two aspects of Darwin's thesis threatened not merely a drastic revision of the historical time-scale within which to make sense of the biblical account, but directly challenged what had been the linchpin of

the traditional mediaeval doctrine. On any Darwinian account of the evolution of the human species from pre-human forms, it made very little sense to conceive of a single 'first man'. At what stage in evolutionary development could one exactly pinpoint a specific individual as the 'first' human, or indeed as the 'missing link'?

And even if one could locate some decisive turning point or threshold, how could any such 'first' human individual be regarded as capable of the kind of decisive moral choice attributed in *Genesis* to an act of deliberate trans-gression which the Christian interpretation of the biblical account apparently required? Any post-Darwin plausible visual depiction of an ape-like transitional ancestor was hardly compatible with the depiction of such a figure making a consciously chosen and morally reprehensible act of disobedience. Certainly it seemed increasingly evident that any such missing link would not have looked at all like the thoughtful peasant in the West Window. The logical foundation for arguments such as Anselm's was decisively eroded, and with it his kind of rationale for a necessarily divine incarnation and a redemptive death by a God-man

Predictably, one response to Darwin revived the seventeenth century notion of Pre-Adamites, partly or indirectly as a way of responding to these two dilemmas. For example, Alexander Winchell, in his *Preadamites or A Demonstration of the Existence of Men Before Adam* (1880) argued that the Adam depicted in the Bible was not the ancestor of all those whom we might call human, but only of the civilised white race, while blacks and other primitive inferiors were indeed descended from a different and older lineage of apes. On this kind of account, 'Adam' had appeared suddenly and quite late in the evolution story and was distinguished by a transformative direct divine infusion into him of a 'soul' which was, unlike those of inferior species and races, morally capable of committing 'sin'. This was a work-around to be compared with interpretations of the six days of creation in *Genesis* as six indeterminately long aeons, or the explanation of fossils several million years old as having been deliberately, if a shade mischievously, planted by the Almighty in recent times.

Some later attempts to reconcile traditional theological doctrine with evolutionary science are more intellectually impressive than Winchell's, such as Karl Rahner's meticulously scholastic study *Hominisation* (1961). But perhaps the most problematic areas for some versions of traditional Christian belief concerning Adam are no longer those arising from competing accounts of mankind's actual historical origins.

Darwin's own thesis, as he acknowledged, was insufficient in itself without some explanation of both the occurrence of mutations within a species and the successful transmission of those particular changes which had proved more competitively viable in specific yet changing natural environments, the trans-generational process of 'natural selection'. How the creative adaptations of the emergent human species, or indeed any species, was able to be passed on to later generations and subsequently further

modified was almost a nineteenth-century variation upon the mystery of how an original state of fallen nature could be transmitted to Adam's descendants, itself a variation upon the overall problematic of 'succession'. Indeed some even proposed that one might be a version of the other, as in the late Adrian Cunningham's ambitiously original *Adam* (1968).

Harvey

However, rather than rehearse the complex and still on-going developments of post-Darwin theories of evolution and the various more or less predictable religious responses, let me rather drastically refocus the issue, with an eye still on how we might react to this marvellous image of Adam. Insofar as *Genesis* offered a version of the origins of human life and death, what would now be a more or less cogent account of the fundamental processes of human living and dying? And how might this relate, if at all, to any theology of fall, incarnation, and redemption? I have to enter unfamiliar terrain.

A perhaps unexpected starting point is the work of a one-time pupil at the King's School in Canterbury, located since the Reformation in the precincts of the cathedral, where the monastic living quarters had once been. William Harvey was a schoolboy at King's from 1588 to 1593, too late to have been taught by John Twyne, and neither the school nor Twyne can claim credit for Harvey's later achievement.

In 1628 Harvey published the short treatise *De motu cordis* which established for the first time that the beating heart was a pump which circulated blood around the body. According to Harvey, it was in fact a double pump: the veins brought blood from the body to the right side of the heart which pumped blood to the lungs, from which it returned to the left side of the heart to be pumped back to the body through the arteries.

Why the blood in the veins appeared aristocratically blue whereas in the arteries it appeared as proletarian red remained a puzzle until the 1870s, when it was shown that the primary function of blood circulation was to transport oxygen around the entire body. A component of the blood now called haemoglobin carried oxygen from the air breathed into the lungs, through the arteries to the various tissues where the oxygen was released and the blood, now changed in colour from oxygen-rich red to oxygen-depleted blue, returned through the veins to the heart. And it was finally recognised that the function of this continuous transportation of oxygen was to fuel a constant process of 'combustion' throughout the entire body.

The body's circulation of blood was in effect transforming oxygen into energy or heat, as well as carbon dioxide and water. The carbon dioxide was breathed back into the atmosphere, where it contributed to the nutrition of the plants which directly or indirectly, through plant-eating animals, provided the foods which together with oxygen, also generated by plants, fuelled the overall processes of human life. Harvey's discovery can in effect

be seen as the first step in a series of accumulating recognitions of how the entire ecological system of the planet is a process of interdependent circulations.

The most far-reaching breakthroughs in our understanding of evolutionary development have not however been thus far concerned directly with the interaction between environment and species, but with the internal bodily processes increasingly revealed by the extraordinary improvements in that other crucial 17th century innovation: microscopic investigation. The core discovery, first published by Theodore Schwann in 1839, was that bodily tissues were composed of 'cells' and that the cell was the site and mechanism for the process of 'combustion'. Schwann had isolated an enzyme (which he called a 'ferment', as in 'fermentation') which promotes a chemical reaction without being itself converted by the reaction. It was the catalytic effect of such an enzyme within a cell which meant that cells themselves were transformed: they grew, reproduced, changed into different forms, and died, a process Schwann termed 'metabolism'.

A very basic and probably not wholly accurate popular account of subsequent developments can be briefly summarised. By the end of the 19th century enzymes were found to be made from proteins and it now seems that each type of enzyme can normally cause only one type of molecular change, but there are perhaps 75,000 different enzymes which can be operative within a cell. Which kinds of protein, and conversely which enzymes, are produced within the body is governed by our 'genes', each coding gene – or, loosely, unit or sequence of DNA acting as the 'code' for a particular type of protein, so that the hundred thousand or so genes in the human genome (comprising the DNA in a cell) provide the 'instructions' for manufacturing the thousands of different proteins that make up a particular human body. The combination of DNA which we inherit from our parents carries the 'information' for making those proteins. The act of sex can inject perhaps between 40 million and 1.2 billion sperm cells into the vagina and each sperm can carry a version of the paternal DNA, only one of which – if any – will successfully fertilise the ovum, thereby combining with the maternal DNA. But this dual inheritance of DNA and the double helix structure of DNA itself means that in the process of reproducing or copying the twofold strands of DNA any modification, variation, or 'error' in the complex sequencing of the four elements which make up the DNA chain may also be transmitted from generation to generation, thereby acting precisely as the 'mutation' which Darwin's theory required but was itself unable to provide.

What is extraordinary, even in such a simplified and compressed account, is the scale and multiplicity of the processes involved at the cellular level which generate the 'mechanisms' or processes whereby the characteristics of both species and individuals are perpetuated and modulated, allowing 'natural selection' to operate. And which thereby enable 'life' itself to occur and continue.

figures

It is worth dwelling on some figures. The cells of which the human body is constituted are only on average 0.002 mm in size, or 20 microns, and roughly 70% of a cell's volume is taken up by water, with perhaps 40% to 80% of the remainder occupied by its ten to twenty thousand different types of protein. Guy Brown, from whose *The Energy of Life* (1999) I have condensed some of this account, writes (p. 79, my emphasis):

> If we *increase the scale by one hundred million times*, we could then see an atom – it would be a centimetre across – roughly the size of a pea; and small molecules like sugars, amino acids and ATP [Adenosine triphosphate] would be five to ten centimetres – the size of apples, cups, and light bulbs. While proteins will be twenty centimetres to a metre, the size of machines, children or small robots. On this scale, an average cell (though very variable in size) would be two kilometres across – the size of a city. But a three-dimensional city – a vast, spherical metropolis. As there is effectively no gravity inside a cell, let's locate this city out in space, its inhabitants floating around inside. Bound by the cell membrane, the cell is divided up into many compartments i.e. internal membranes, each of which is half a metre thick – like, say, the wall of a house on our expanded scale. These compartments include a maze of tunnels – the width of a small road – connecting different parts of the cell. Attached to these tunnels and floating throughout the cell are many 'ribosomes', the factories that make proteins, which would be the size of a car. And the cell is criss-crossed by a vast number of filaments – that on this enlarged scale, are the size of steel girders or pylons – which act as the cell skeleton, and to which the proteins may attach themselves. Mitochondria, the power stations of the cell, would be the size of a power station – and there would be around a thousand in each cell.

He elaborates further:

> All the molecules vibrate, rotate and collide with their neighbours about a billion times a second. This incessant shaking movement is powered by the body's heat energy, the random motion of the molecules. It is this random shaking causing all of the smaller molecules to move endlessly around the cell, held back only by the membranes, and their tendency to stick to other molecules. It is like an out-of-control pinball game, with trillions of balls, speeded up a billion times. But as there is effectively no friction nor gravity, it is a three-dimensional game. This random walk of all molecules, called diffusion, causes a molecule such as ATP to visit most parts of the cell every second, colliding with literally billions of other molecules. Larger molecules like proteins, the

> machinery of the cell, move at a more stately pace, but unless attached to membranes or filaments, they still vibrate and rotate roughly a million times a second. An enzyme or other molecular machine performs its function, assembling, disassembling or transporting other molecules roughly a thousand times a second.

Let me explore some general considerations. Any such current understanding of the human body might well be regarded as having considerable implications for some elements of traditional Christian doctrine. In particular, to maintain the notion that Christ was 'fully human' is to imply not only that a double inheritance of parental DNA would have been required but also that his body was in (genealogical) continuity with the entire evolution of the human species, at a level of dependence (including serendipitous mutations) rather more complex than that indicated by a basic family tree or the lineal genealogies of direct 'succession' in Matthew 1, 1-16 and Luke 3, 23-38.

In principle, of course, an appeal to the theological doctrine of divine omnipotence might be no more, or less, persuasive an explanation today than in relation to previous understandings of the human body as, say, a composite of four humours or as compacted of the four elements, earth, fire, water, air. The same might be said of religious explanations of the initial creation of a unique specific Adam figure, or how an individual person's body might be reconstituted in a resurrected state. Some theological insights might even be generated by an awareness of the intricate filiations between any single individual and the entire species.

However, I want to focus particularly upon 'time' as an aspect of the intricacy and complexity of the living cell: that the 'life' of the cell is constituted by inter-connected and inter-dependent processes, predominantly electrical and chemical, repeated many trillion times over during an average human life-span and yet almost perfectly 'timed' in relation to each other. How we envisage those processes as co-ordinated, in the sense that each of these repetitive actions meshes with every other process in a sustainable sequence or cycle, depends in part on whether we focus on the cell, the living body as a whole, or the entire ecological system. We can for example think of the Earth's orbit around the Sun, daily and seasonal, as configuring and regulating the fundamental processes of photo-synthesis through which plants grow. Or we might consider the level at which the build-up of electrical charge within an axon can trigger a synapse in the brain's neural network. Or we could focus upon the processes of cell division, multiplication, and variant replication. All these are, it seems, temporal processes operating on radically different scales, with each at a different tempo yet intimately coordinated.

From a different perspective, while we may increasingly understand the processes whereby life is perpetuated and modified, mutated and selected, the question of how 'life itself' ever began at all remains deeply problematic.

Images of a divine finger mixing clay with spittle may even seem almost as persuasive as speculative accounts of some kind of primordial chemical soup being struck by lightning. The problem partly depends on how one defines or conceptualises 'life' as distinct from 'non-life', or rather how one thinks of living as a process, even an activity, which begins and comes to an end. If 'life' is to be envisaged as emerging from 'non-life', what is the defining distinction and the threshold between these two domains?

Is it that the realm of non-life is primarily governed by the second law of thermodynamics, whereby any organised arrangement of matter tends towards an eventual dis-organisation, an increase in entropy, since it is always more probable that a process will lead to a less organised state than to a more organised state? A mountain will wear away, the universe will eventually face heat-death. Whereas what is intriguing about 'life' is precisely 'its' self-sustaining and self-reproducing quality: its apparent capacity to maintain and prolong itself: an insect can forage for nutrition, a flower can somehow reappear in the spring, and most fundamentally any living entity can reproduce itself. But is it then a mistake, a kind of double displacement, to use the word 'life' as a noun, even as 'a life'?

We have increasingly come to register how the very possibility of human living remains dependent not simply upon the more obvious aspects of seasonal change or cosmic cycles but also upon maintaining or at least protecting the fragile relations between chemistry and climate, whether in the production of toxic agricultural products or the excessive consumption of forms of energy such as oil or sugar. A considerable reconceptualisation of what we might now mean by 'human history' has been implicit in this newly comprehensive perspective. Not only has the human species been to some extent liberated from such temporal constraints as seasonal mating or necessary hibernating, but we have also increasingly freed ourselves from such time-bound conditions as daylight or seasonal food production. Perhaps with eventually dire consequences. Since in the process we have as a species perhaps dangerously dislocated and rendered vulnerable or out-of-synch the numerous different rhythms upon which we have depended.

A similar paradigm shift might be in progress in relation to individual human time, which has been exceptional even within this overall schema of cosmic and cellular synchronicities, since every temporal process other than individual human time seems in one way or another determined, articulated, intricated, mutually inter-meshed with largely repetitive processes, at various levels of analysis. While this also remains true for many aspects of individual and collective human activity or action, what is extra-ordinary is that in some respects a human individual's life time may not be wholly governed by the temporal processes which also shape and coordinate the related temporalities of planets, plants, and even other animals.

Plant and animal processes or tempos are overwhelmingly dominated by inherited, instinctive, repetitive patterns of behaviour, whereas the human species has rendered itself (through whatever mutations) relatively

independent of several of the temporal layers, the various rhythmic beats and processes which partly constitute the rest of the animal world, by being able to modify or break with time-constraints in relation to such basic rhythms as food consumption and copulation, including even a degree of control over birth and death itself.

Moreover, each human individual can to an exceptional extent, compared with other species, shape what might be thought of as their individual time-budget, sometimes even including an element of almost haphazard or whimsical allocation of the time given over to a complex repertoire of activities. For example, you might well at this point suddenly or impatiently decide to wander around an actual cathedral rather than continue browsing this book. How this peculiar human mode or set of flexible temporalities evolved remains a puzzle. In particular, our capacity to 'take our time', to 'pause for thought', to just 'waste time'. Such as slowly browsing through a long essay with no apparent end-point or conclusion.

time again

One element in understanding these issues is the way in which we have developed the insights originally suggested by William Harvey's generation of pioneering 17th-century investigative scientists, by utilising the enormous improvements in our ability to 'zoom into' and to measure and record the processes we wish to explore. As the various figures cited above for the comparative scale of cellular and intra-cellular processes demonstrate.

Yet what has largely evaded such investigative procedures is a fully coherent account of the very processes of 'thinking' which enable humans to understand the development and application of those other processes. We have been tempted to fall back upon the notion that it is somehow 'the human mind' which does the 'thinking' which both elaborates theories and devises experiments. Yet however closely we can 'zoom into' the human brain we have not as yet, one can say, appropriately managed to measure a thought, to calibrate 'thinking' though we can record the electrical energy which constitutes it. Though we can now eavesdrop on Stephen Hawking's thinking, using an electronic signal to a computer rather than watching him write on a blackboard. I will return to these issues elsewhere. Yet how might they relate to the notion of human time?

It is fundamentally an ongoing equilibrium between energy input and output which keeps bodily rhythms viable. A human body is thus composed of the same range of processes as any other animal or indeed any living object. An individual human time is a physical process initiated, kick-started, at the moment of conception, as defined by an intersecting moment in the time-lines of two other humans, but henceforth to be maintained by the initiation and repeating of semi-autonomous cell-duplication, and thereafter composed of several continuing time processes and rhythms, tempos which usually combine but which may falter in their

synchronisation. That synchronising is the effect or product of an evolved coordinating of chemical, electrical, muscular, hormonal, and many other processes which normally interact persistently or reliably with each other (each dialectically depends upon and pre-supposes the others), and each of which has its own specific tempo or temporality: an overall process or ecology of compatibility and change which is perhaps never exactly repeated, nor wholly predictable and stable, any more than the configurations of weather patterns composed of multiple interacting processes of wind, moisture, temperature, and so on, will or can ever exactly repeat as a total weather pattern. You might recall looking through a microscope at any actual living process, or just look at the clouds in the sky, or imagine 'repeating' or replicating, say, the Budapest rising of 1956 or the killing of Becket.

In particular, it seems the relationship between the ever-changing neural configurations of a working brain and the other bodily cycles can never be completely reproduced or replicated even within the same individual body. To reconstruct a fleeting insight or a complex sustained thought is difficult enough, far more so than – for example – an actor attempting to reproduce exactly a complex facial expression for a second take while filming a scene in a movie. Which is one reason why being retrospectively clear about even our own past motives is peculiarly difficult, as biographers and historians, auto-biographers and psychoanalysts, recognise. And also why every human child grows into its very own patterns and unique personality in that early and continual dialogical interaction within its maternal embrace, and its immediate but variable social world of instruction and imitation, its inescapable modulations of interactive timings with others. Moreover, unless the always-prematurely born human infant lives within that social embrace for a considerabe 'shared time' it will be prematurely dead.

My conception occurred as the moment of an intersection not only of the dual inheritance of DNA strands but also in the convergent time-lines of two other humans, and my conception is when my 'own time' begins, which is not itself a moment within that time. My conception and death are the limits, the edges, the brackets, of my specific living processes, regarded as 'my' time. Between the moment of conception and the moment of death is when 'my time' occurs, and no moment of that between-time is or can be 'empty' but is filled with all of the temporal processes which constitute 'me.' In Aristotle's view, to designate a 'now' is to open and to close a set of brackets in order to demarcate, to make measurable, a time, and somewhat as a sentence (or even a parenthesis) is not itself composed of brackets, so a timed process or activity is not itself composed of an initial point-like 'now' and a final 'now' in some abstract dimension of 'time', but is rather constituted by the activity itself, including that curious and basic activity of persisting, or repeating, or living. To adapt Wittgenstein's remark, neither my conception nor my death is an event in my time.

There is thus no 'empty time' between birth and death. The total composite of the body 'moves' always, changes 'all the time', as we say, and though most human time is continuous, constant, and simul-taneously co-ordinated at the several different 'levels' of rhythm and repetition occurring as the various bodily processes, chemical and electro-physical, there are only those two convergent moments in other people's times which initiate the ongoing complementarity of these multiple processes which then occur between those brackets which mark the beginning and the end of another human body, which constitutes that unique time: between conception and death. Between before and after. Nobody else has my time or can 'spend' it or can 'live' it. Though a great deal of human 'history' consists of efforts to control or attempts to support the complex timings of each human individual.

The body persists in a constant reconfiguring, from the rhythmic circulation of blood to the constant replacement of cells or skin, hair or nails, some of which continue growing after the death of the individuated body as a whole. What makes a entity living is that combinatory of multiple time processes which occur in and as that body, the tempos that constitute it. They are self-generated and self-sustaining, in the sense that once the cell division and multiplication which constitutes successful conception has begun, that process will normally continue to replicate itself and to modulate itself in accordance with the entwined inherited strands of DNA, provided only that there is some suitable form of energy input and processing: food, water, oxygen, sunlight, in a continuing interaction with those many other rhythms and processes. Which in turn have their own various temporalities. Including the complex tempos of necessarily shared social life. And what we call our own 'history'.

Insofar as any entity exists as a coordination or equilibrium of times – in a human body as heart-beat, blood-circulation, synaptic chains, electrical impulses, operating with different time rhythms, and binary on-off patterns – it is therefore vulnerable to wear and tear, interruptions and entropic dissolution, the possibility of rhythms going out of gear with each other, even at the quantum level of uncoordinated fluctuations. The stability of a living body is a matter of rhythms repeated coherently yet variantly, the very motions of circulation, repetition and interrelation, involving different temporalities, constituting interlacing tempos, the pumping of a heart, the blinking of an eye, the firing of a synapse. Yet each specific timed process or entity has its own overall metric of change constructing and contributing to rather than simply changing 'in' 'time', conceived as an external or pre-existing framework, still less an abstract universal matrix. A form in some ways perhaps akin to an ongoing polyphonic music.

What counts as a moment, a 'now', may be differently conceptualised and measured: a pulse beat compared with a computer calculation, a quantum fluctuation compared with a single rotation of a planet. Each 'moment' might be defined or calibrated in relation to a postulated cosmic space-time,

a multiplex of relative temporal frames for which the appropriate 'unit of time' is not best derived from earth-oriented notions such as a light-year, as much a projection of parochial measurement as the English mile or the French kilometre, or perhaps even the ticking of an atomic clock. How far entities are perceived as changing 'over time' depends upon the scale of temporality involved: a time-lapse photograph taken over a millennium would appear to show a mountain rapidly shrinking or growing, while an annual satellite snapshot might reveal the slow shrinkage of a glacier. What normally persuades us to see a living process as a matter of continual and relatively uniform change is that we perceive according to a scale calibrated to our own living rhythms. Yet as with the page-length of a historical narration there is no fixed universal ratio of duration. How long does time take when space-time itself curves?

A tempo, pulse, or rhythm may be conceived as an alternation between one action and another action, or as the repeated suspension of the first action, an oscillation between presence and absence, or what happens and does not happen, as with on/off in a circuit. But there is no moment at which nothing happens. There can be the alternation of more and less, analog rather than digital, continuum rather than indivisible points, wave rather than particle. The different rhythmic components of the human body may be synchronised while an analogue rhythm obtains, but a total breakdown, for whatever intrinsic or extrinsic cause, of that multiplex rhythm results in a binary on/off as regards the total life-rhythm of that particular human. Off is death.

While there may be interruptions or hiatuses in particular corporeal rhythms, there can be no overall temporal gaps. I cannot take time off from my own time. Nevertheless, one peculiar evolved capacity of human 'life' is to be able to suspend a process of action, a further aspect of that peculiar element in the composition of human time which we variously call consideration, expectancy, deliberation, foresight, memory, hesitation. A pause for thought, we can say. Perhaps to consider a cathedral. We can surely, at least, nearly always, take a rest? Or just repeat ourselves.

in your own time

It is time to return to previous motifs. There is almost a contradiction in the relationship between our ever more detailed comprehension of human material temporality as unique and specific to each individual, and therefore as constitutive of our very identity and, on the other hand, the almost 'common sense' notion pervasive within our dominant culture that our individuality involves some form of spiritual and non-material entity, a 'soul' or 'mind', which though specifically associated with one particular body is somehow separable from and independent of that body. A belief which once underpinned this very cathedral. It is perhaps, ironically, precisely because we are aware of our own unique material temporal

identity that we can so readily claim to see ourselves as destined for an indefinable a-temporal existence as a non-corporeal spirit. However, attempts to formulate concepts such as 'soul' or 'spirit' are perhaps shaped by a fundamental denial of how human individual time is constituted, and it may also be that the very notion of time systemically escapes our intellectual grasp, despite the best phenomenological and philosophical efforts of, say, Husserl or Heidegger.

We might nevertheless reconceptualise 'the soul' not as a time-less or eternal entity uncomfortably embodied or reluctantly incarnated 'in' a body but precisely as the specific individuality of a particular and unique body's temporality, a tempo that is one's own time and no body else's. Some of the body's times, both momentary and longer-term, may be modified by the human capacity to interrupt and divert activities, by self-correction and feed-back, which allows the possibility of retro-inspection and forward planning, partly owing to the emergence of the various tenses and modalities of human languages which in effect allow us to construct a conscious and deliberative awareness of both unique and shared temporalities.

Human language can differentiate within the apparent continuum of time in order to discriminate between what a particular language names as different entities or distinct processes or subjects, even though at a cosmic, global, or corporeal level, there may be no gaps in the continuousness, the continuity, of those processes, as there is no blank in history, no gaps in time. The worlds keep turning. Though a planet can come to an end as surely as a genealogy. And even the gaps in a broken line tracing a sub-atomic collision may not be explicable as blanks in time's trajectory. There is no empty time.

Language may, in a familiar sense, permit us to choose between categorising as separate the several consecutive phases in the growth of a living entity, as a seed, a shoot, a stalk, a bud, a flower, or a tadpole and frog, caterpillar and butterfly; or alternatively regarding the entirety of the life-cycle of a plant as a single entity, somewhat like a chord in music rather than as a succession of notes. We might say the same of our individual selves.

This, in other words, is what European languages term 'history', including 'natural history'. Insofar as two events occur 'at the same time' they might be regarded as constituting the same single event, a spring or autumn, or perhaps even the rising in Budapest 'at the same time' as the invasion of Suez in 1956. Whereas some dual events such as two people becoming 'the Pope' can only logically or linguistically occur as consecutive rather than simultaneous events: hence the 'succession' of archbishops of Canterbury. Aristotle once remarked that the smallest number is two. A temporal sequence or historical account requires a minimum of two moments, however arbitrarily defined, bracketed, or separated. Except, maybe, at the quantum level, where superposition occurs. Though it is unclear whether

the absence of tenses in the language of mathematical equations, and the essential reversibility of mathematical calculation, can accommodate temporal flow except as another uniformly calibrated variable or axis. Which is not, it must seem to us, how human time operates.

The modification of human temporal horizons or boundaries by the development of tenses also allows the use of the fictive mode and the hypothetical or optative mode: what did, what might or will happen, and what could or should have happened. Human imagination can postulate impossible synchronicities. We can think in terms of 'events' insofar as they have been shaped by language, by stories and by texts, both at the time of their occurrence and afterwards, from reported gossip to diplomatic correspondence to formal history dissertations, so that if 'an event' is not told there may be only non-textual traces which at some point will perhaps be woven into quite a different story. Like an accidental fire incorporated into a chronicle event.

This may include the overall 'event' of our own life. Unless our life-time is told to others or at least partly to ourselves, there is perhaps only the daily repetition of living. For us to register time there have to be variations, the events of other people's lives, births, marriages, and deaths, including in some cultures tales of an after-life involving ghosts and apparitions. And science too tells stories, as in the write-up of an experiment, or the tales told by Bruno Latour about laboratory life.

This is not to say that only stories exist and that there never were any events but rather that events have a continuation of their existence in and as stories. With various levels of generalisation or abstraction in the form of the story: a biography, a statistical spreadsheet, a fiction with no corresponding actual event, a lab report detailing an inexplicable particle collision.

We tell stories in time, normally consecutively even when we deploy flash-backs and diegetic jump-cuts. But some texts don't require the tenses of time: a mathematical equation presents itself as a-temporal, as do some tales about an eternal divinity. One of the problems about theological narratives is how to compile a two-timing tale, one which deploys narrative time and the other which does not. Compare the tenses of the following: "He woke up one morning and had breakfast", "God looks down on us all", "The sun shone having no alternative", "God became man", "Adam fell."

With some stories we cannot tell what happened before or after: how many children had lady Macbeth, or the future military career of Fortinbras. But telling a tale always itself takes time, an oral story is also an event, although a written text can, sometimes, become detached from the time of its composition, not unlike a permanent equation, a classic formula.

Tales can be judged as coherent or incoherent, as plausible or persuasive, as unbelievable or self-contradictory, as shaped by or as breaking the codes of a known genre. We perhaps think that the story corresponds to the truth

when other tales and other traces fit with it. Compare the distinction, sketched earlier, between major and minor in Gervase and in Walter Benjamin. Perhaps a minor event can apparently be told in a single and simple narrative, whereas a major event seems to require the interweaving of several different narratives and therefore temporal strands, while a totalised account would require an omniscient recitation of infinitely overlapping tales. The notion that there might be an immortal time, an a-temporal time, a never-ending story, attempts to sustain a belief in gods, themselves envisaged as telling performative tales in their own eternal palaces, on Olympian mountaintops, or in an a-temporal heaven above the fleeting clouds. *In medias res.*

temporal horizons

Perhaps, after all this, one might say, there is no single time but only intersecting temporal entities, processes of entropy and structuration with flexible boundaries of organisation or self-sustainability. Insofar as an 'event' is an unstable conjuncture of several different temporal processes, so too is the necessarily variable interweaving of a complex text which recounts it. Such as this one.

We might compare spatial and temporal awareness: each person has his or her own visible horizon, as mine which accompanies me as I move through space; each may also have a unique time horizon, local and specific, both almost completely personal and deeply cultural. Perhaps one cultural 'mutation' in our time (and some cultures) is a loosening of the once-powerful notion of a life-time as a journey, a pilgrimage, a project, the erosion of an ambition-driven through-line by a preference instead for a kind of drift or meander, a *dérive* shaped as much by unexpected encounters, short-term opportunities, unanticipated acquisitions, as by any overall model of a lifetime with an end-term, even a pension or a funeral. A lifetime as distraction, postponement, procrastination, not as plan, product, immortal contribution, memorable residue, eternal recompense, or retribution. In such a mode, the very notion of a first 'Adam' and the lasting consequences of his 'fall' may seem wholly unintelligible. Though the lasting effects of not anticipating or planning to prevent a rise in global temperature will not.

I might want to sustain a distinction between the material time embedded in an archaeological fragment, perhaps a bit of stone from the excavation of the nave, part of the history which is 'gone', but a relic of which I can still hold in my hand, as compared with the textual time of a manuscript or printed volume which I may also hold in my hand, though the manuscript may be both a textual opening onto the recorded past and a physical residue of that past. In one sense a physical object may have its time embedded in it as indicated by carbon-dating, based upon the calculated half-life of the atomic organisation of that object, the measurable process of the decay of

its form: entropy and disorganisation. But apart from those archaeological sites, physical remains, ruins and relics, the past has perished, vanished, no longer exists except as reconstructed in narrative and interpretation. It's not that 'history' has vanished into 'empty time' but rather that some events and processes have variously stopped, come to the end of their time, even if they were immediately replaced by other processes. That a battle, a war, an Empire, a species or a galaxy, is 'over' is perhaps no more mysterious than that an egg boils at a certain temperature. That I am dead initiates a transmutation into worm food or ash.

There may be a mode of temporal perspective in, for example, the form of a project, the writing or reading of this wandering book, for example. I can constantly adjust the temporal horizon in which I work on this project, though I cannot arbitrarily extend my time-horizon for finally finishing it by permanently postponing my death. Not even the most inconsiderate publisher would demand that deadline. Though Walter Benjamin might have attempted it. As it happens, I am writing this section after being informed that I have stage IV cancer which has its own time processes indifferent to mine.

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To recap, and finally finish with the nave section. William Harvey's discovery of the circulation of blood marked a significant turning point in the direction of research into the nature of 'life', opening a path to an increasingly microscopic scale of investigation, while the work of Charles Darwin later marked another paradigm shift on a global scale. As it happens, one can also make a mild claim for a Franciscan Friar, named after a Kentish village, as having made a contribution to our understanding of even more fundamental issues to do with the very nature of the physical universe and its temporality. We can meet Archbishop John Pecham some time later, if not soon.

Meanwhile, it is mildly instructive to enter one's date of birth into a website which will calculate that, for example, when I was born I was then, according to the offered data, the 2,397,786,004th person alive on Earth. In my brief life-time since that date, the world population has grown to over 7 billion. At birth I became (give or take) the 75,172,208,250th person to have lived 'since history began' – or as the United Nations Population Fund currently defines 'history'.

The nave looms perhaps misleadingly large when we first see the receding vista of the cathedral from the Christ Church Gate. But we have already lingered in it for rather too long. History, after all, is lengthy. If you choose to explore other half-thoughts prompted by this strange edifice, I promise to increase the pace, not least by having fewer quotations from past texts. Though I will shortly not be able to resist citing that interesting iconoclast, Richard Culmer, who wanted to destroy the very windows which tourists now come to admire.

And we still have to explore, for example, the fact (alleged) that among the relics once held in the Cathedral Treasury there was a portion of the clay out of which Adam was made.

So, in the next meander, we will pick up the tempo and try to move along a shade more smartly. Though it will be a while before you can take a well-deserved rest in the choir, and listen to some well-timed music . . .

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Canterbury Cathedral, proclaimed a six-year old visitor,
is 'a big building full of stories' and 'it smells of history'.
It's also a World Heritage Site which attracts thousands of tourists
who briefly wander around, take photos, and leave.
Probably impressed, and admiring, but often puzzled.

In a short visit it's hard to pin down the 'half-formed thoughts'
and elusive responses the cathedral can prompt or provoke.

Perhaps about history, time, death, the past, but also about
art, science, money, philosophy, belief, politics, and why
for a thousand years monks spent most of their time singing.

This first part mainly considers several historians
associated with the mediaeval monastery and the cathedral
in order to get some of my own 'half-formed thoughts'
into focus. The cathedral is large, and so is this essay.

But you can take your own time forming your own thoughts.

Enjoy your visit.

Bernard Sharratt lives in Canterbury
and has had to show friends round the
Cathedral for nearly fifty years.
And still doesn't quite know
what he thinks about it.